SHAKESPEARE

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

EDITED BY

H. M. PERCIVAL, M.A.

LATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AT
PRESIDENCY COLLEGE, CALCUTTA

HENRY FROWDE
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INTRODUCTION

I. DATES

THE DATES OF THE PRINCIPAL TEXTS of *The Merchant of Venice* are:—

1. 1598: an acting text, meant solely for the use and benefit of the company of actors called 'the Lord Chamberlain's Servants', and entered in the Stationers' Register, with a proviso that it is not to be printed for publication without the Lord Chamberlain's licence.

2. 1600: a text printed for publication: the First Quarto.

3. 1600 (later): another such text: the Second Quarto.

4. 1623: a third such text, reproducing no. 2 above, in the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's collected plays.

Other quarto and folio editions appeared later; but they are of little value in determining the text.

THE DATE OF COMPOSITION of *The Merchant of Venice* is fixed by evidence partly external and partly internal. The external evidence is: (1) In Meres's *Palladis Tamia*, published in 1598, the names of twelve of Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies are given, among which occurs the name of this play: this fixes the inferior limit of date, later than which the play could not have been written. (2) In Henslowe's Diary or Account Book, dated 1594, a play called *The Venetian Comedy* is mentioned as being staged by his company. This play is supposed to have been an earlier version of the story of our play: if so, this fixes the superior limit of date: so that as far as external evidence goes, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* was composed between 1594 and 1598.

The more important internal evidence points variously to dates between 1594 and 1598. It is as follows: (1) In III. ii. 49 sq. it is supposed that the references are, in 'new-crowned monarch', to Henry IV of France, crowned king at Chartres in February 1594, and in 'true subjects', to the loyalists, who are pointedly distinguished by the adjective from the rebels, then in possession of Rheims, the usual coronation-place of the kings of France. It is conjectured on this supposition that the play was written shortly after this event—say, late in 1594. (2) In the comedy of *Wily Beguiled*, written in 1596, there occurs an obvious imitation of the words 'In such a night' that are frequently repeated in v. i. (1, 3, &c.). It is conjectured, then, that the play was written shortly before this date. (3) In Silvayn's *Orator*, of which an English translation was published in 1596, there is a story of 'a Jew who for his debt would have a pound of the flesh of a Christian', in which there are striking resemblances to Shylock's speeches in the trial scene. It is conjectured that these resemblances are due to one's being borrowed from the other: if Shakespeare borrowed from Silvayn, then the date of composition of the play falls between 1596 and 1598, the inferior limit fixed above from external evidence. (4) In a Latin play, acted in 1597, there occurs the incident of a Jew whetting his knife. It is conjectured that this incident was borrowed from our play. (5) In I. i. 44, the words 'this present year' have been supposed to refer to the year 1597, on the strength of a statement in Munday's *Brief Chronicle*, to the effect that in that year many merchants 'in Spain, *in Italy*, in Antwerp, Amsterdam and Middleborough', *became bankrupt*. (6) In May 1594, Dr. Lopez, a Jew, was hanged for treason at Tyburn: at his trial there figured one Antonio Perez, popularly called 'Don Antonio'. It is conjectured that this incident suggested the writing of the play to Shakespeare at a time when popular feeling against Jews, always strong, had thus been intensified. (7) The frequency of rhymes and classical allusions and the

'family resemblance' between the fooling of Launcelot in our play and that of Launce in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, written in 1592 or 1593, point to an early date, near 1594, for the composition of this play. On the other hand, the greater freedom from Euphuism and mere word-play, with which the earlier of these two comedies abounds, the greater depth and seriousness of thought and feeling, and the greater proportion of blank verse,—all point to a later date of composition, near 1598, and near to the dates of later comedies such as *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

The Title of the play, as given in the entry of 1598, mentioned above, is *The Marchaunt of Venyce or otherwise called the Jewe of Venyce*. The first of these alternative titles points to the *action*, which centres round the merchant Antonio, who, however, cannot be called the hero of the play merely because he is such a centre. The second points to the *characterization*, in which the most striking character is Shylock's, who, again, though he is the arch-villain of the play, cannot be called its hero, either. That title (in the feminine) belongs to Portia, the one personage in the play who unites goodness and strength in her character, and guides events to a happy issue in its action.

THE DATE OF THE ACTION. This, if it can be settled at all, falls within very wide limits. (1) The action must be placed in the days of the commercial supremacy of Venice, before its decline, which resulted from the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, and the transfer of that supremacy to the Portuguese and the Dutch. This is the lower limit of the date of the action. (2) In I. ii. 77 sq. the reference to the defeat of the Scotch by the English *may* point to the earliest of these defeats; those, namely, during the reign of Edward I. This, then, may be the higher limit. These two limits, together, merely place the action *sometime* in the Middle Ages.

II. SOURCES

The relative probabilities of the alleged sources vary a good deal. The chief ones are: (1) *The Ballad of Gernutus*, of unknown date. Earlier critics, unaware of the sources brought to light later, looked on this ballad as the undoubted source of the play, basing their opinion upon the general similarity between the stories of the two, and upon numerous coincidences in details. For instance, in the ballad occur these expressions, closely resembling those in the play: 'merry jest,' 'pound of flesh,' 'keep your day,' 'the merchant's ships were all at sea,' 'hundred crowns' (as the loan), 'ten thousand crowns' (as the offer at the trial), 'whetted blade.' The two great points of difference between the two stories are that the name 'Shylock' is not found in the ballad, and that 'the judge' is not stated to be a woman in disguise. These two points are insisted upon by these earlier critics as going further than the coincidences, towards proving the ballad to be the source of the play, and towards discounting the possibility of the play being the source of the ballad. Later critics, aware that the play has been clearly traced to other sources, attach little weight to this argument, and look upon the general resemblance and the coincidences in details as proving the ballad to be derived from the play. (2) The Bond Story and the Ring Episode in the play are derived from an Italian book of tales, *Il Pecorone*, written by Giovanni of Florence in 1378, and known to Shakespeare probably not in the original, but in an English translation, now lost. The main incidents in one of these tales are the same as in the story and episode based on it in the play, and the name of Portia's counterpart in it is 'the lady of Belmonte'. But the names of all the other personages are different; the plan adopted by the lady for ensnaring her suitors is very different from the casket story that the play substitutes for it, and the character of Ansaldo, Antonio's counterpart, is

entirely free from that offensiveness towards the nameless Jew in the novel, that, in the play, supplies a strong motive for revenge in Shylock. (3) The Bond Story and the Casket Story are found in two separate stories in the *Gesta Romanorum*, a compilation of tales in Latin, made towards the end of the thirteenth century, of which two English translations, at least, had been made before Shakespeare's time. The points of resemblance between these stories and the play are not very close, and even the three inscriptions on the caskets are not quite the same. (4) The speeches in the Trial Scene resemble one of the 'Declamations' in Silvayn's *Orator*, already noticed above. (5) Both Casket and Bond Stories are supposed to be referred to in Gosson's description of a play in his *School of Abuse* (1579). The play, now lost, is called *The Jew*, and the description runs thus: 'The one' (namely, the play) 'representing the greediness of worldly choosers and bloody minds of usurers'. These two clauses have been taken to indicate that this play combined the two stories, and that, because of this combination, it was the immediate source of Shakespeare's play. Of course, in the absence of the play itself, this is unsafe ground to build on. (6) Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, written probably in 1589, though certainly it influenced Shakespeare's play in both plot and characters, cannot be looked upon, as some critics have done, as one of its sources. In Marlowe, Barabas, the Jew, is a usurer and miser, who hates Christians: he has a daughter, who loves a Christian, but who eventually enters a Christian nunnery. In particular passages the similarity—with minor differences—between the two plays, is again in evidence: thus, Barabas, who is not only usurer, like Shylock, but merchant, like Antonio, enumerates his argosies, as Shylock does those of Antonio; both Jews talk of father Abraham, and of the blessings—in special, the blessing of thrift—that his children enjoy; both speak against the misuse of Scripture to support wrong-doing, both inveigh against 'huge feeders', both rave about the loss of their girl,

and their gold, in the same breath. (7) The *Venetian Comedy*, mentioned above, is supposed to be the same as a play by Dekker, entitled *Josephus, the Jew of Venice*, now lost. Some critics suppose there is extant a German version of this play, the title of which, in English, would run as *The Righteous Judgement of a Girl-graduate, or The Jew of Venice.* This play has been traced back as having been enacted in Germany by Green's English troupe, but not earlier than 1608. This date, and the particular points of resemblance between Shakespeare's and the German play, seem, however, to indicate that the original of the latter was not a source of the former, but an imitation of it. (8) The Elopement Story has for its remote origin a story in a collection of tales in Italian by Massuccio of Salerno, written about 1470.

In the history of literature, the Pound of Flesh Story and the Casket Story have long pedigrees and distant cousins. Thus, the former has been found to exist in Persian, in Turkish, in Sanskrit, and in some of the modern Indian languages: the latter has been traced back—from the *Gesta Romanorum*, successively through the *Golden Legend*, Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale*, the Latin translation of *Barlaam and Josaphat*—to, at last, the original Greek of this last work, written by John of Damascus about A.D. 800.

III. PERSONAL

Recent critics have attempted to show that a somewhat close connexion existed in some cases between the subject-matter of Shakespeare's plays and his manner of life at the time of writing them. In the case of *The Merchant of Venice*, it is a fact that, about the time of the composition of this play, whose subject-matter turns upon property or wealth in its three principal shapes, Shakespeare himself had been engaged in acquiring wealth in London in one of these shapes—that of money—and was converting some of it into

another—that of houses and landed property, in his native county. In 1597 he bought the estate of New Place in Stratford; with another portion of his money he sought to obtain a coat of arms for his father, and in 1599 he succeeded in obtaining one for himself, as 'W. Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, Armiger', i.e. 'Gentleman'—thus entering the ranks of the local aristocracy of title and wealth. Another personal point supposed to be connected with this play is the question whether Shakespeare had travelled in Italy. The opinion that he probably had is supported thus: (1) The London theatres were closed for a year in 1592–93, thus setting him and others connected with them free to leave London and make a tour, if they liked, on the Continent. (2) There are proofs in this play of a degree of acquaintance with the local topography of Venice, that could have been acquired only from a visit. They are these: (*a*) Young Gobbo, kneeling before his father, is supposed to have been suggested by the *Gobbo di Rialto*, a kneeling stone figure, forming the base of a pillar on which the decrees of the Republic were affixed. (*b*) The Venetian Exchange was, as described in the play, actually held on the Rialto. (*c*) The 'common ferry', mentioned in III. iv. 53 as plying between Belmont and Venice, was very likely that at the mouth of the Brenta, plying between Dolo and Venice, giving, as it does, the distance of twenty miles that Portia speaks of. (*d*) No Jews had been allowed to reside in England since their expulsion in 1290. Hence no study of the Jewish character from the life was possible to Shakespeare in his own country, as it would be in Italy, where in Coryat's time, only a few years later than the time of his supposed visit, there were 1,100 Jews residing in Venice alone. (*e*) None of the above details of topography could possibly have been derived from books, since the earliest English books on Venice were all written after the play itself, such as Lewkenor's in 1598, and Coryat's in 1611.

IV. ACTION

(A) Its Duration. Two difficulties arise in computing the time taken up by the action of the play: one from the 'three months' that have to elapse between the signing of the bond and its falling due; the other, from the 'month or two', the 'day or two', that Portia wishes Bassanio to wait before going to make his choice. The following attempts—none of them quite satisfactory—have been made to solve these difficulties:

1. Eccles computes thus:

First day—Act I, Sc. i, ii, iii, ending with Morocco's arrival 'to-night'.

Second day—Act II, Sc. i (which scene Eccles changes into Act I, Sc. iv), on which Morocco makes his choice 'after dinner', i. e. after the *forenoon*, the dinner-time in Shakespeare's days.

An interval, of uncertain duration, accounting for a portion of the three months.

Third day—Act II, Sc. ii–vii (changed by Eccles into Act II, Sc. i–vi), ending with Bassanio's sailing for Belmont, at 9 o'clock.

Fourth day—Act II, Sc. viii, ix (Eccles's Sc. vii, viii).

A second interval, also of uncertain duration.

Fifth day—Act III, Sc. i.

A third interval, of a fortnight.

Sixth day—Act III, Sc. ii–v, the trial going to take place 'to-morrow', as Antonio tells Salarino.

Seventh and last day—Act IV, Sc. i to the end of the play.

(Halpin's computation of a duration of only thirty-nine hours for the entire action needs no further attention).

2. Daniel computes thus:

First day—Act I. *Interval*, say, of one week.

Second day—Act II, Sc. i–vii. *Interval*, of one day.

Third day—Act II, Sc. viii, ix. *Interval*, down to a fortnight of the bond's falling due.

Fourth day—Act III, Sc. i. *Interval*, of little over a fortnight.

Fifth day—Act III, Scc. ii–iv.

Sixth day—Act III, Sc. v, Act IV.

Seventh and eighth days—Act V.

In both these computations it will be observed that the second difficulty is hardly touched upon.

3. Furness applies to this play the *Double Time* computation that Wilson applied to the play of *Othello*, and by its means succeeds, not so much in solving the two difficulties by patient arithmetic, as in heroically cutting them through like the Gordian knot.

Double Time consists (1) of *historic time*, such as would be computed directly by ordinary arithmetic from explicit indications given in a play, and could be compared to the hour-hand of a clock, and (2) of *dramatic time*, that can be computed from incidents in a play, indirectly and implicitly pointing to a much longer lapse of time than the historic computation points to, and that can be compared to the minute-hand, that traverses the whole of a twelve-hour space on the dial-face during the same time that the hour-hand takes to traverse a single one-hour or five-minutes space. Incidents that indirectly imply the lapse of time in this play are: the preparations needed to enable Bassanio to make an imposing entry into Belmont; the gradual way in which the first vague rumours of the loss of some Venetian vessel or other take the definite shape of the certain loss of Antonio's ships; the abeyance in which the progress of the action is kept by the shifting of the scene from Venice to Belmont, and Belmont to Venice; Jessica's visit to as distant a place as Genoa, and the time needed for squandering money there (and elsewhere on the way); Tubal's long search after her, tracing her from place to place; her turning up at last at the other side of Italy, at Belmont; her assertion that she had heard her father swear he meant to exact the penalty; Shylock's importuning the duke night and day for

justice, while the duke and grandees of Venice plead with him for mercy instead; Antonio's wasting away through grief at his losses and at their consequence now impending over him.—This is a long list of incidents, each of which implies a certain lapse of time, and which, taken together, can easily fill up the gap of three months.

(B) Its Plan. The plan of this play (as distinct from its plot or story, for which the reader is referred to Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*) is to show how Wealth—what one *has*—and Character—what one *is*—act and re-act on each other. Wealth, in its three main shapes of landed estates, merchandise, and money, is possessed by the three leading personages. At the opening of the action, to none of the three has the possession brought happiness: for all their wealth they are sad, each with a different cause. The course of the play brings the sadness of each to a crisis; its conclusion leaves two of them in happiness, the third in misery, and us, the readers, with the feeling that each has obtained what he or she well deserves. This final difference between the three who started on equal terms in the possession of wealth, is due to differences between them of character. Portia deserves her happiness as the reward of true love, Antonio his as that of true friendship, and Shylock his misery as the punishment of a hatred that excludes from his heart the emotions of love and friendship alike. The struggle in which hatred is the aggressor and the two other emotions are on the defensive forms the subject of the action. Revenge is Shylock's motive, and the letter of the law his justification. But true justice refuses what the letter of the law sanctions; for an absolute right at law, if enforced to the very letter, is the greatest wrong when judged by man's natural sense of justice. Love and friendship are quick both to detect this wrong and to devise a remedy, by pleading the cause of mercy. Their victory shows Right as Wrong and Wrong as Right, a paradox which holds true both of the main action and of the minor actions

of the play. Thus, a maiden's love justly attains the happiness of which the capricious will of a dead father threatened to deprive it; the robbery of a father by his own daughter is a just retribution for his avarice; the running away of a servant from his master is a just return for his ill treatment; a promise made by husband to wife is broken, that it might be offered as a sacrifice on the altar of friendship. In the third of these cases, this question of Right and Wrong is discussed and settled in the way we feel it should be, though the manner of the discussion is comical enough.

Possession of wealth thus fails to confer that happiness which worth of character succeeds in winning.

The other main story of the plot treats of character in a different aspect. As, in the first story, we learnt to distinguish what a man *is* from what he *has*, so the silent lesson of the caskets, in their effect on the different suitors, teaches us to distinguish what a man *is* from what he *seems to be*, and to see how the mistaking of appearances for reality brings deserved failure, and the discerning of real worth, underlying unpromising appearances, brings the happiness of deserved success. The two stories together, point a single moral: the most deceptive of the appearances of worth is wealth, and the most precious form of real worth is character.

Closely similar lessons are taught by the minor actions. Poverty is joined to cheerfulness in the person of a clown, a 'merry devil': the sweet moonlight idyll proceeds from the lips of the runaway couple only after they have made themselves penniless through their folly during the short-lived hour of their wealth: a most irrepressible liveliness shows itself in a gentleman of small means, careless about enlarging them: *per contra*, the fruitless longing for wealth shown by the parasites leads them into envy and malice against those who have more of it.

These main and minor actions are embodied in three stories and an episode, with connecting links serving to unite them into one coherent whole. Thus, the Bond story is closely and at the very outset connected

with the Casket story, as the loan is necessary for the courtship. With both is connected the Elopement story; for the flight with a Christian precipitates the design for revenge upon Christians, already apparent in the bond story; and, just after the casket story ends, the repentant runaway couple are made to act as caretakers at Belmont, while its mistress is away on her errand of frustrating that design. On the happy issue of this errand follows the Ring episode, serving many purposes: it transforms the lawyer-judge back into the wife; it puts to the test the strength and sincerity of the husband's love and friendship alike; it dispels the gloom left behind by the harrowing trial scene, and follows it up with a humorous mock-trial of husband by wife.

What degrees of probability have these stories? Are they likely ever to have happened in real life? The answers are not the same for all. (*a*) The Jewish law permitted loans at usurious rates to 'strangers', i.e. to non-Hebrews or Gentiles, so that Shylock's *usual* practice was perfectly legal. In the bond story the 'merry jest' of the pound of flesh at first looks like no more than a jest, playfully devised by Shylock as a substitute for the interest that he waives in deference to Antonio's objection to the taking of interest. But such a thing had happened in actual business transactions, in all seriousness, long before Shylock's days. The discharge of a debt with the flesh of a debtor who is unable to discharge it in money was the penalty in the insolvency enactment of the ancient Roman law of the Twelve Tables; the exacting of a penalty in strict accordance with the letter of the law was the prevailing tenor of justice in the ancient Jewish law; and both ancient Greek and Roman law gave to a creditor a right over the person of an insolvent debtor, extending to the taking of his life, similar to a master's right over the life of a slave. Opposed to the inhuman spirit of these ancient laws, stands the humane Christian idea of Equity, requiring that the letter of the enactments of

the law should be interpreted in the spirit of man's natural sense of justice. (*b*) The condition laid down in the father's will, in the casket story, places a daughter's happiness at the mercy of chance, the uncertainty of which is not much lessened by the inscriptions outside; for others, attaching very different symbolic meanings to the three metals, might be as appropriate. In fact, the two disappointed suitors in the play *do* attach meanings to these inscriptions as they stand, very different from what the father meant. In those of the older casket stories, where inscriptions occur, they are different from those in the play. In the play itself, the successful suitor might himself have made a wrong choice, if he had been left to put his own unaided interpretation on the inscriptions, and had not received a hint (as he did) as to what the interpretation for the right choice should be. (*c*) The third story and the episode, on the other hand, have nothing in them that would be improbable in real life.

Are the law and procedure at the trial scene probable, or in accordance with the Venetian law and code of those or any other times, or indeed, with the law and procedure of any time or country? On the one side it is claimed that the law of the Twelve Tables, referred to above, placed *no restriction* as to the size of the piece of flesh the creditor was entitled to cut off, so that, in this respect, the restriction in the play was an act of 'mercy' shown by plaintiff (though it lost him his suit); and that the statute law of Venice and other commercial Italian States did, on sound political grounds, impose the penalty of death on an alien who had plotted against the life of a native citizen. A resemblance, too, has been pointed out, for what it is worth, between the extraordinary procedure in the play and that actually prevailing in some of the Spanish-American States in the nineteenth century. Also, since the powers of the Doges of Venice were sovereign, the exercise of the prerogative of mercy by the doge in the play was perfectly constitutional.

On the other side it is urged that both law and procedure in the play are entirely opposed alike to the common law of England, of which Shakespeare knew something, and to what is known of the customs prevailing in Italy at any time: that the judgement is based on a mere quibble, since all sound law lays it down that where a legal right exists (in this case the right to the pound of flesh), there the incidents and acts necessary for the enforcement of that right (viz. the shedding of blood in cutting off the flesh) are also lawful: that, in fact, in the present case, this legal right cannot exist, since it is based on an unnatural, inhuman, and absurd condition: that therefore the plaintiff had a legal right only to his debt's being repaid in money, but none to the penalty in case of failure of repayment: that the appeal to mercy, though touching, is illegal, and fit to proceed only from the lips of an amateur girl-lawyer and judge, whose heart is fuller of pity than her head is of legal knowledge: that no line between counsel and judge is drawn, but that the same person is made to be judge and counsel for both parties. All this makes out a strong case, no doubt, on the side of improbability, though on the last point there is the analogy of the old Sudder Dewanny and Adalut Courts of the East India Company, in which the judge was helped, on questions of Hindu and Mohammedan law, by Indian legal experts. On this analogy Portia would be an expert 'consulting' lawyer, called in to expound the law of the case.

V. CHARACTERS

The action outlined above illustrates, through the characters of three of the chief personages enacting it, the play of the emotions of ardent love and devoted friendship joining their forces against a concentrated passion of hatred, and succeeding in defeating its malevolence. Between love and friendship themselves there is a rivalry as to which is stronger: whether friendship, when a friend is willing to sacrifice his

very life in order to ensure a happy issue to his friend's love; or love, when, in return, this friend is willing to sacrifice the happiness of married life, rather than refuse an apparently trifling request made by the friend whose devotion had helped him to reach that happiness. Between hatred and another passion, avarice, there is also a contest, in which the former triumphs. Love and friendship appear in varying degrees in the different characters. Thus there is friendship, the strength of whose devotion faces death; friendship not strong enough to go to any length in that direction, but yet sincere; friendship, as it goes in the world, not all sincere, nor all unmixed with envy of a friend in prosperity, yet not devoid of regret for him in adversity. Thus, too, there is deep love, of slow growth and severe trials; love at first sight, and courtship in hot haste; romantic love, strangely yoked with prudent fortune-hunting; homely love between father and son in humble life;—all different in their natures and degrees, but all alike in being forms of true love. Again, in the unsuccessful suitors we find love tempered by inordinate vanity and pride, and alloyed by the spirit of fortune-hunting. Opposed to all these forms and degrees of love and friendship, true and false, there stands forth a lovelessness and hatred in all the relations of life, exemplified in one single character.

This diversified play of emotion and passion in the characters is developed in the several stories that make up the action. Thus, the bond story develops Shylock's public character, grasping as a usurer and vindictive as member of an alien, downtrodden race; while the elopement story illustrates his private character as a harsh, unloving father, and a stingy, grinding master. The bond story, again, develops Antonio's character: in public life, a merchant and banker, just and generous in his dealings; in private life, a fast friend to his own kind, but insolent, after the fashion of his times, towards aliens and non-Christians. Similarly, in the bond and casket stories combined, Antonio's friendship

supplies the money that enables Bassanio's love to succeed, but not before Bassanio's fears for his friend's safety, at the proposal to sign the bond, almost get the better of his love and of his need for money; at the trial, to save his friend, he offers to sacrifice his wife and life itself; and in the ring episode, he actually sacrifices (as he fully believes) his domestic happiness for friendship's sake. Similarly again, in these two stories, Portia's sense of obedience to a father's will, when he is no longer alive to enforce it, proves stronger than her love; she adopts her husband's friend as her own, and, by a prompt and noble act for friendship's sake, saves him from death.

Other traits of character, of course, cluster round these main emotions of love, friendship, and hatred, on which the action and its component stories turn. These traits, and those in the characters of the other important personages, are briefly outlined below.

Shylock

Among the characters, Shylock's is the one figure that stands forth as an antithesis to every other that he comes in contact with, in every marked trait, just as, in the action, Antonio's is the one figure round which, as a centre, turns every leading incident. His avarice and miserliness contrast with the generosity of Antonio and the spendthrift extravagance of Bassanio and of his own daughter; his malignity and cruelty with the beneficence of Portia, ever delighting in doing good; his total want of humour contrasts with Tubal's quiet sense of it; his ceaseless self-tormenting with the unfailing light-heartedness of Launcelot and Gratiano; his business-like habits with the romantic turn of mind of daughter and son-in-law; his cruel exultation at Antonio's impending fate with the pity felt for him by all Venice, from the doge down to the parasites; his insistence on the letter of the law with the appeal to his mercy, in which all the court of justice joined; his rejection of this appeal

with the duke's readiness to show mercy to *him*, without being appealed to; his groan of despair at the final disappointment of both avarice and revenge with the sigh of relief that eased the tension of mind of every one present in that court. In all this, Shylock stands alone on one side; everybody else stands opposed to him, in a body, on the other. But this isolation in character need not have made him the *un*human monster in conduct that he certainly grows into: for there were causes that made both character and conduct, so far, very human and natural. The laws of mediaeval Europe, forbidding Christians to be money-lenders, put money-lending, almost as a monopoly, into the hands of the Jews; which naturally led to usury in business life, and avarice and miserliness in character. Usury now became one more reason for that animosity between Jew and Christian that had existed for centuries before, on racial and religious grounds, and for its result—cruel persecution by the one, and long suffering by the other. What more natural than that such treatment should give rise to feelings of resentment and revenge? To these causes, applicable to all Jews, were added others applicable to Shylock personally: Antonio used to lend money *gratis*, thus injuring his business as a lender on interest; he used grossly to insult him in public; his fellow Christian had run away with both his daughter and his money; his race, his religion, his person, his domestic ties, had been outraged; his business had been impaired, his property stolen. All this very naturally gives rise to a sense of wrong and injury, to feelings of resentment, to a cry for justice, and, that failing, to a longing for revenge. His justification of revenge for such treatment is unanswerable, and the hard-heartedness it reveals is excused by the wrongs which he for a lifetime, and his race for centuries, have suffered. So far Shylock's inhumanity is human.

But when the desire for revenge is perverted into inflexible malignity, and that for justice into revolting cruelty, when he attempts to make the very life of

a Christian atone for his lending money gratis and for his insolence, and to visit the wrongs suffered by a whole race at the hands of all Christendom upon the head of that single man who had also most offended him personally, we begin to doubt the patriotism of this self-appointed avenger of his race, and to feel sure only of his vindictiveness. It is *then* that Shylock's conduct ceases to be merely *in*human, and becomes *un*human; and we turn against him, as against a wild beast: so that when we see him for the last time, baffled and broken-down, he stands all alone, as he did in the days of his strength, with none drawn to his side by pity or sympathy.

Minor traits contribute to Shylock's character without destroying its consistency. He is puritanic in confining his reading to the Old Testament and in being penetrated by its spirit, and, unlike his supposed prototype Barabas in Marlowe, possesses no knowledge of Greek and Latin literature. He is certainly not, as some critics make him out to be, a *national* type of the mediaeval Jew, for, in the play itself, there is Tubal, a Jew and yet of a very different type from Shylock; and, in mediaeval history, there are many Jews to be found, poor, unselfish, lovable, benevolent, learned in all the learning of the times, and therefore having nothing in common with Shylock, except nationality. But he is certainly a *class* type of the Jewish money-lender of those ages.

Antonio

Though it is nowhere stated, yet certain traits of character point to Antonio as a man who had inherited wealth, as others do to Shylock as a self-made man. For the generosity of the one is marked by sentimental recklessness, as the avarice of the other is by calculating clear-headedness: the free money-lending of the one is not a way to make money, as the usury of the other certainly is: his sending out to sea all his ships with all his capital, keeping nothing in reserve, in bank or

harbour, as insurance against risk of loss, and his signing a bond of such a nature while this risk was still hanging over him, are actions that cannot fit a man to be the maker of his own fortune. On the other hand, his integrity as a merchant, his devotion as a friend, his liberality as a wealthy member of society, are traits of which Shylock, infinitely his superior in shrewdness as a man of business, is wholly devoid. In the hour of adversity he is indifferent to his impending fate, and anxious only that it may not embitter the happiness of the friend for whose sake he was to suffer. Before this, poetic justice had already made him atone sufficiently, one would think, for his past insolence towards Shylock, by making him humiliate himself before him—once, when 'like a fawning publican' he enters to negotiate for the loan, and, a second time, when, as a debtor-prisoner, he follows him in the street, humbly begging him to show mercy—in vain. The last time we see him he is at his old work again, standing security for his friend, but this time it is for a different kind of debt, and to a very different creditor: he stands security to that friend's wife for her husband's future good conduct.

Bassanio

Noble by birth, scholar by education, soldier by profession, but a prodigal in his habits, Bassanio has moved in the very best circles, but has squandered his fortune, and now continues to move in society, where his accomplishments make him popular, upon borrowed means. He sees a chance of repairing his fortunes if he can woo and win the heiress of Belmont; to be able to do this in a becoming manner he asks for a loan—not the first asked for and obtained—from his bosom friend. Does not this look like downright fortune-hunting? It would, had there not been subtle touches by which Bassanio is saved from figuring as a sordid, mercenary adventurer. For it is Portia who has fallen in love with him, more than

he with her: his love is based more on her virtues than on her beauty: to be able thus to judge of her character, he must have known her and been aware of her love for some time: she knows that he has no wealth, for he has told her: other suitors have presented themselves at Belmont before him, and it is his delay that makes Portia 'aweary of this great world', as she says: it is she who, through the song, conveys the hint that guides him to the right choice of a casket. All these touches save Bassanio from contempt, and make him one whom fortune seeks, rather than one who seeks for fortune, who loves virtue more than he needs money, and who is loved for his own sake alone. In friendship, at the opening of the action, he figures only as one who is placed under an obligation; at its close, also as one who repays it; the obligation nearly costs the friend who confers it, his life; the repayment costs Bassanio, as he quite believes, his own domestic happiness. The love and friendship of others sought him, at first, because of the charm of his manner; the tests of his own love and friendship he is able to pass because of his greatness of heart: it is, perhaps, to bring this, the precious gift of nature, into greater relief, that the poet endows him less with gifts of the head. It is his deeply affectionate nature that commands the affections of friend and wife, and raises him, from what at first looks like mere self-seeking—sponging on the generosity of the one and hunting for the wealth of the other—to the moral level of both when, under test, he gives proofs of a capacity for self-sacrifice that equals theirs.

Gratiano

Contrasted with Bassanio's seriousness and with the gloom that hangs over every important personage in the play at some time or other, we have the volatility and vivaciousness of Gratiano. Every scene where he appears is enlivened by his sparkling merriment, except the terrible crisis of the trial scene,

when even *his* tongue is silenced, but only to be loosened with redoubled energy when the crisis is over. There are about 'two grains' of sense in 'two bushels' of his talk: he promises to be on his good behaviour, as a member of Bassanio's suite at Belmont, but he must have a carnival before entering on that abstinence: there, his wooing is carried on at high pressure: it is his tongue that utters the fiercest invectives before the crisis of the trial, and the merriest taunts after it. His affections, though lighter, are as rightly placed as Bassanio's; his aversion, though noisy, is directed with unerring keenness against Shylock; and for all his mercurial temperament, his sincerity is undeniable.

Lorenzo

The romance of love and the business of fortune-hunting are strangely combined in Lorenzo. The contempt that Bassanio's character escapes, falls upon Lorenzo's. Its force is partly disarmed, because the fortune that he hunts belongs to one who long had been, and still is, seeking to ruin the fortunes of others, and because, with the fortune he also carries off the daughter whose home has been made a hell for her by the father, whom he thus doubly punishes by doubly robbing.

Launcelot

Half-starved by his master, till, as he indignantly exclaims, 'you can count every finger I have with my ribs,' Launcelot, the 'merry devil', has yet made her father's house endurable to Jessica. He has no wealth, but he has something his master has not—a conscience with whom he has a long and laborious debate before he runs away. Something else, too, he has that the other has not, namely, affection. This he shows in different forms: —the affection of a friend for the ill-used daughter, at parting with whom 'tears exhibit his tongue'; the affection of a son for an infirm old father, whom he supports out of his scanty earnings, though he is waggish enough to 'try confusions with him', and

to 'raise the waters' in his old, half-blind eyes, with a fictitious report of his own death; the affection of a servant, zealous for the new master who treats him generously, but displaying in his comic way much dislike and disobedience towards his temporary substitute. These traits of character in this poor, ignorant, muddle-headed serving-man, present him as a moral contrast, if not a moral superior, to Shylock, in spite of the latter's keen, clear intellect and rigid, puritanic ways.

PORTIA

Both in the beauty and strength of her character, and as the chief agent in the plot, is Portia the heroine of the play. There is no corresponding hero: for Antonio, like Adam in *Paradise Lost*, is mainly a sufferer who has to be saved, and Shylock, like Satan, is most powerful in evil, and has to be foiled. The performance of this task, and the unfolding of a character fitted to perform it, confer upon her alone the right to that title. At the opening she figures as a young girl, playful and sweet-tempered with her intimates, courteous and dignified towards strangers, in love with all the fervour of a virgin passion, unhappy through fear that her love may be crossed, yet, with the buoyancy of youthful spirits, making light of her fears. But, as the action progresses, she gives signs of that strength of mind that is to enable her, only three months or so later, to perform a hard and noble task. The first of these indications is given by her resolution to obey the will of her dead father, though disobedience to it would not only involve no loss of the great wealth she was heir to, but would ensure the happy issue of her love, while obedience to it might be the death-blow to both love and happiness. Here, then, is moral strength, showing itself in filial duty, discharged under most trying conditions. The next indication is given by her voluntary submission of herself and of all she possesses to her husband, as one whom law and religion made lord over her, though

she must be aware he is her inferior in the intellectual powers that should belong to such a sovereignty. Here, then, is moral strength shown in wifely submission, made under circumstances that least call for it. The next indication is when, on her very wedding day, she parts with her husband, that he may fly to the side of his friend in distress. Here her moral strength enables her to put away the cup of her own happiness even when at the lips, in order that she may meet this call upon her to relieve the misery of others:—'she never did repent for doing good; nor will she *now*.' Upon these signs of the moral strength of her mind, follow those of its intellectual power. While she sends her husband off with the money for his friend, her decisive character makes her resolve to provide legal help herself. By happy chance, the lawyer whom she consults for this purpose also happens to be asked by the duke to sit as special judge over the case. With an audacity that the consciousness of her own powers and the successful issue alike justify, she resolves to impersonate the judge, and—strange honeymoon occupation for a bride—gets herself coached in the case by him. The duke accepts her as substitute; she opens the trial, and at once pronounces the law of the case to be quite clear—judgement must go against the defendant. But next comes the long, eloquent, moving appeal to the plaintiff, which, to be sure, no legal procedure in any age or country could allow a real judge to make, but which comes with sweet persuasion from the heart of a girl disguised in gown and wig. The appeal fails with the only human being in the play with whom it could possibly fail. Thereupon she appeals to his avarice—she offers him ten times the amount due—but fails; for revenge has become stronger than avarice. Lastly, she appeals to his humanity—let him execute judgement on defendant, but let him try not to make it cost him his life:—that too fails, for 'it is not in the bond'. It is only after Shylock has thus shown himself to be undeserving of merciful

treatment, that Portia, after long and patient forbearance, pays him back in his own coin:—she declares, in altered tones, that the bond gives him flesh but no blood. This decision, pronounced after all other resources to save an innocent life have been exhausted, loses nothing of its force either in poetic or in moral justice, by being called a legal quibble, when by it, he who has callously demanded justice according to his bond, receives justice, and finds it to be more than he desired, and all that he deserved. But whether appealing to the Jew's mercy, or punishing his want of it, Portia always preserves the soul of womanliness within her, that makes her heart to be ever the guide of her head.

What she accomplishes in the trial scene is a great work, but it is not a lifelong task. Such a task is foreshadowed in the ring episode. The bearing of this episode on the action, and on Bassanio's character, has already been noticed; to Portia it means this:—Bassanio had been a society man, a man of the world: a dissipated manner of life and a squandered fortune had left a mark, happily not indelible, on his character. This mark Portia, if ever heiress and wife was qualified to do so, was destined to efface in the course of her married life, and to give his character a new turn in this new sphere of country life and domestic happiness that he now enters upon. In the casket scene, Shakespeare, according to the ideas of his times regarding the 'obedience' due from wife to husband, had made her formally resign herself and her wealth to him: in this episode, Bassanio virtually returns the trust into the hands of her who had proved herself best fitted to administer it, and resigns himself henceforth to the guidance of her superior wisdom.

Thus has the progress of an action of but three months' duration developed the girl into the woman, the maiden into the wife. The quickness of the change need not make it improbable; for the elements of the maturer character were all there in the bud, only awaiting events to bring them forth.

Nerissa

A serving-woman, Nerissa is yet sufficiently trustworthy to be taken into her mistress's confidence, and has caught enough refinement from her society to be made a 'lady companion' and, eventually, to become the wife of her husband's volatile friend. Of her affection for Portia there are proofs in her attempt to reconcile her to the hard condition laid down by her father's will, in her tears of apprehension at what might be the issue of Bassanio's choice, and in her subordinating the issue of her own love to the result of that choice. Her acting the part of clerk, and her picking the quarrel over the ring, show that she had enough mother-wit and liveliness to match that of her husband.

Jessica

A young, motherless girl, left by her father without female companionship, and with all the love of innocent pleasures, natural in the young, harshly suppressed by him; shut up in his house (it can hardly be called her *home*) as in a prison, her chief duty to keep watch over his treasures;—Jessica is less to blame if she does not behave like a daughter towards such a father, than Shylock is for a conduct that drives her to such behaviour; and her cold, sullen manner towards him is the response to be expected from his distrust and harshness towards her. Her natural affections, starved at home, look for food abroad, and find it in a lover. That lover is a Christian, to whose marriage with his daughter the Jew will never consent. Hence the only solution of this problem is elopement, to which she is drawn by another reason, namely, that it will also be a release from the unhappiness of her prison-life. Her robbery of her father shows the single trait of character she has in common with him—she, too, knows the value of money—but it also makes her the instrument of poetic justice in punishing his avarice. Her

squandering of her father's wealth is to be expected as a reaction from the privation that she had been made to endure by him: and as this had forbidden even harmless and necessary relaxations, the reaction naturally runs to foolish extravagance. Then follow regret and repentance, when the money is all gone. It is in this frame of mind that she arrives in Belmont, where we see her dejected, silent, hanging back from notice. The kind welcome extended by the thoughtful Portia, and the prospect of being befriended by her in the future, revive her and her equally thriftless husband. It is in this mood that we hear them indulging in the 'moonlight idyll', recalling the romance of their secret courtship and contrasting it with the present, when the reality of three months of married life, as they playfully put it, has dispelled its fleeting colours. But these colours have, indeed, been partly dispelled by the dissipation of their wealth; and what remains of romance finds expression in raptures upon the beauty of moonlight and the sweet power of music. But raptures like these do not mend a broken fortune. The two, however, deserve theirs to be mended, much more than Shylock his; yet they cannot be left a second time to the free handling of money. Therefore Shylock's forfeited wealth is placed in the hands of a prudent trustee, to be used for their benefit at his discretion. Thus the contrast between the characters of father and daughter is maintained to the last.

The details that fill up the above outlines of characterization, as well as brief notices of the characters of the minor personages, will be found (under the particular passages that illustrate them) in the NOTES.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

DUKE OF VENICE.
PRINCE OF MOROCCO, } Suitors to Portia.
PRINCE OF ARRAGON, }
ANTONIO, a Merchant of Venice.
BASSANIO, his Friend.
GRATIANO, }
SALANIO, } Friends to Antonio and Bassanio.
SALARINO, }
LORENZO, in love with Jessica.
SHYLOCK, a rich Jew.
TUBAL, a Jew, his Friend.
LAUNCELOT GOBBO, a Clown, Servant to Shylock.
OLD GOBBO, Father to Launcelot.
LEONARDO, Servant to Bassanio.
BALTHAZAR, } Servants to Portia.
STEPHANO, }

PORTIA, a rich Heiress.
NERISSA, her Waiting-maid.
JESSICA, Daughter to Shylock.

Magnificoes of Venice, Officers of the Court of Justice, Gaoler, Servants to Portia, and other Attendants.

SCENE.—Partly at Venice, and partly at Belmont, the seat of Portia, on the Continent.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

ACT I.

SCENE I.—Venice. A Street.

Enter ANTONIO, SALARINO, *and* SALANIO.

ANTONIO. In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:
It wearies me; you say it wearies you;
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn;
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,
That I have much ado to know myself.

SALARINO. Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
There, where your argosies with portly sail,—
Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,
Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea,—
Do overpeer the petty traffickers,
That curtsy to them, do them reverence,
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

SALANIO. Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth,
The better part of my affections would
Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still
Plucking the grass to know where sits the wind;
Peering in maps for ports, and piers, and roads;
And every object that might make me fear
Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt
Would make me sad.

SALARINO. My wind, cooling my broth,
Would blow me to an ague, when I thought
What harm a wind too great might do at sea.
I should not see the sandy hour-glass run
But I should think of shallows and of flats,
And see my wealthy Andrew dock'd in sand
Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs

To kiss her burial. Should I go to church
And see the holy edifice of stone,
And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
Which touching but my gentle vessel's side
Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks;
And, in a word, but even now worth this,
And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought
To think on this, and shall I lack the thought
That such a thing bechanc'd would make me sad?
But tell not me: I know Antonio
Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

ANTONIO. Believe me, no: I thank my fortune for it,
My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate
Upon the fortune of this present year:
Therefore, my merchandise makes me not sad.

SALARINO. Why, then you are in love.

ANTONIO. Fie, fie!

SALARINO. Not in love neither? Then let's say you are sad,
Because you are not merry: and 'twere as easy
For you to laugh and leap, and say you are merry,
Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed Janus,
Nature hath fram'd strange fellows in her time:
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes
And laugh like parrots at a bag-piper,
And other of such vinegar aspect
That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile,
Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.

Enter BASSANIO, LORENZO, and GRATIANO.

SALANIO. Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman,
Gratiano, and Lorenzo. Fare ye well:
We leave you now with better company.

SALARINO. I would have stay'd till I had made you merry,
If worthier friends had not prevented me.

ANTONIO. Your worth is very dear in my regard.
I take it, your own business calls on you,
And you embrace the occasion to depart.

SALARINO. Good morrow, my good lords.

BASSANIO. Good signiors both, when shall we laugh ? say when ?
You grow exceeding strange : must it be so ?

SALARINO. We'll make our leisures to attend on yours. [Exeunt SALARINO and SALANIO

LORENZO. My Lord Bassanio, since you have found Antonio,
We too will leave you ; but, at dinner-time,
I pray you, have in mind where we must meet.

BASSANIO. I will not fail you.

GRATIANO. You look not well, Signior Antonio ;
You have too much respect upon the world :
They lose it that do buy it with much care :
Believe me, you are marvellously chang'd.

ANTONIO. I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano ;
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.

GRATIANO. Let me play the fool :
With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,
And let my liver rather heat with wine
Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.
Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster ?
Sleep when he wakes, and creep into the jaundice
By being peevish ? I tell thee what, Antonio—
I love thee, and it is my love that speaks—
There are a sort of men whose visages
Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
And do a wilful stillness entertain,
With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion
Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit ;
As who should say, 'I am Sir Oracle,
And when I ope my lips let no dog bark !'
O, my Antonio, I do know of these,
That therefore only are reputed wise

For saying nothing; when, I am very sure,
If they should speak, would almost damn those ears
Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.
I'll tell thee more of this another time:
But fish not, with this melancholy bait,
For this fool-gudgeon, this opinion.
Come, good Lorenzo. Fare ye well awhile:
I'll end my exhortation after dinner.

LORENZO. Well, we will leave you then till dinner-time.
I must be one of these same dumb-wise men,
For Gratiano never lets me speak.

GRATIANO. Well, keep me company but two years moe,
Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

ANTONIO. Farewell: I'll grow a talker for this gear.

GRATIANO. Thanks, i' faith; for silence is only commendable
In a neat's tongue dried.

[Exeunt GRATIANO and LORENZO.

ANTONIO. Is that anything now?

BASSANIO. Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them, and, when you have them, they are not worth the search.

ANTONIO. Well, tell me now, what lady is the same
To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage,
That you to-day promis'd to tell me of?

BASSANIO. 'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
How much I have disabled mine estate,
By something showing a more swelling port
Than my faint means would grant continuance.
Nor do I now make moan to be abridg'd
From such a noble rate; but my chief care
Is, to come fairly off from the great debts
Wherein my time, something too prodigal,
Hath left me gag'd. To you, Antonio,
I owe the most, in money and in love;
And from your love I have a warranty
To unburthen all my plots and purposes

How to get clear of all the debts I owe.
ANTONIO. I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it;
And if it stand, as you yourself still do,
Within the eye of honour, be assur'd,
My purse, my person, my extremest means,
Lie all unlock'd to your occasions.
BASSANIO. In my school-days, when I had lost one shaft,
I shot his fellow of the self-same flight
The self-same way with more advised watch,
To find the other forth, and by adventuring both,
I oft found both. I urge this childhood proof,
Because what follows is pure innocence.
I owe you much, and, like a wilful youth,
That which I owe is lost: but if you please
To shoot another arrow that self way
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,
As I will watch the aim, or to find both,
Or bring your latter hazard back again,
And thankfully rest debtor for the first.
ANTONIO. You know me well, and herein spend but time
To wind about my love with circumstance;
And out of doubt you do me now more wrong
In making question of my uttermost
Than if you had made waste of all I have:
Then do but say to me what I should do
That in your knowledge may by me be done,
And I am prest unto it: therefore speak.
BASSANIO. In Belmont is a lady richly left,
And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,
Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages:
Her name is Portia; nothing undervalu'd
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia:
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors; and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece;
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strond,

And many Jasons come in quest of her.
O my Antonio! had I but the means
To hold a rival place with one of them,
I have a mind presages me such thrift,
That I should questionless be fortunate.

ANTONIO. Thou knowest that all my fortunes are at sea;
Neither have I money, nor commodity
To raise a present sum: therefore go forth;
Try what my credit can in Venice do:
That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost,
To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.
Go, presently inquire, and so will I,
Where money is, and I no question make
To have it of my trust or for my sake. [Exeunt.

SCENE II.—Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA.

PORTIA. By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world.

NERISSA. You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are: and yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing. It is no mean happiness therefore, to be seated in the mean: superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer.

PORTIA. Good sentences and well pronounced.

NERISSA. They would be better if well followed.

PORTIA. If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple. But this reasoning is not in the fashion to choose me a husband.

O me, the word 'choose'! I may neither choose whom I would nor refuse whom I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one nor refuse none? 26

NERISSA. Your father was ever virtuous, and holy men at their death have good inspirations; therefore, the lottery that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver, and lead, whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you, will, no doubt, never be chosen by any rightly but one who you shall rightly love. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come? 34

PORTIA. I pray thee, over-name them, and as thou namest them, I will describe them; and, according to my description, level at my affection. 37

NERISSA. First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

PORTIA. Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse; and he makes it a great appropriation to his own good parts that he can shoe him himself.

NERISSA. Then is there the County Palatine. 44

PORTIA. He doth nothing but frown, as who should say, 'An you will not have me, choose.' He hears merry tales, and smiles not: I fear he will prove the weeping philosopher when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly sadness in his youth. I had rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in his mouth than to either of these. God defend me from these two!

NERISSA. How say you by the French lord, Monsieur Le Bon? 53

PORTIA. God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man. In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker; but, he! why, he hath a horse better than the Neapolitan's, a better bad habit of frowning than the Count Palatine; he is every man in no man: if a throstle sing, he falls straight a-capering; he will fence with his own shadow: if I should marry him, I should marry twenty husbands. If he would despise me, I would

forgive him, for if he love me to madness, I shall never requite him.

NERISSA. What say you, then, to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

PORTIA. You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian; and you will come into the court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a proper man's picture, but, alas! who can converse with a dumb-show? How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour everywhere.

NERISSA. What think you of the Scottish lord, his neighbour?

PORTIA. That he hath a neighbourly charity in him, for he borrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman, and swore he would pay him again when he was able: I think the Frenchman became his surety and sealed under for another.

NERISSA. How like you the young German, the Duke of Saxony's nephew?

PORTIA. Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk: when he is best, he is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast. An the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift to go without him.

NERISSA. If he should offer to choose, and choose the right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's will, if you should refuse to accept him.

PORTIA. Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee, set a deep glass of Rhenish wine on the contrary casket, for, if the devil be within and that temptation without, I know he will choose it. I will do anything, Nerissa, ere I will be married to a sponge.

NERISSA. You need not fear, lady, the having any of these lords: they have acquainted me with their determinations; which is, indeed, to return to their home and to trouble you with no more suit, unless

you may be won by some other sort than your father's imposition, depending on the caskets.

PORTIA. If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable, for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence, and I pray God grant them a fair departure.

NERISSA. Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither in the company of the Marquis of Montferrat?

PORTIA. Yes, yes: it was Bassanio; as I think, he was so called.

NERISSA. True, madam: he, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving a fair lady.

PORTIA. I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise.

Enter a Servant.

How now! what news?

SERVANT. The four strangers seek for you, madam, to take their leave; and there is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco, who brings word the prince his master will be here to-night.

PORTIA. If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach: if he have the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me. Come, Nerissa. Sirrah, go before.
Whiles we shut the gate upon one wooer, another knocks at the door. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.—Venice. A public Place.

Enter BASSANIO and SHYLOCK.

SHYLOCK. Three thousand ducats; well?
BASSANIO. Ay, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK. For three months; well?

BASSANIO. For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound. 5

SHYLOCK. Antonio shall become bound; well?

BASSANIO. May you stead me? Will you pleasure me? Shall I know your answer? 8

SHYLOCK. Three thousand ducats, for three months, and Antonio bound.

BASSANIO. Your answer to that.

SHYLOCK. Antonio is a good man. 12

BASSANIO. Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

SHYLOCK. Ho, no, no, no, no: my meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition: he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies; I understand moreover upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath, squandered abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but men: there be land-rats and water-rats, land-thieves, and water-thieves,—I mean pirates,—and then there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks. The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient. Three thousand ducats; I think, I may take his bond.

BASSANIO. Be assured you may. 27

SHYLOCK. I will be assured I may; and, that I may be assured, I will bethink me. May I speak with Antonio?

BASSANIO. If it please you to dine with us. 31

SHYLOCK. Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into. I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. What news on the Rialto? Who is he comes here?

Enter ANTONIO.

BASSANIO. This is Signior Antonio.

SHYLOCK. [Aside.] How like a fawning publican he looks!

I hate him for he is a Christian ;
But more for that in low simplicity
He lends out money gratis, and brings down
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.
If I can catch him once upon the hip,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,
Even there where merchants most do congregate,
On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift,
Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe,
If I forgive him !

BASSANIO. Shylock, do you hear ?

SHYLOCK. I am debating of my present store,
And, by the near guess of my memory,
I cannot instantly raise up the gross
Of full three thousand ducats. What of that ?
Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,
Will furnish me. But soft ! how many months
Do you desire ? [To ANTONIO.] Rest you fair, good signior ;
Your worship was the last man in our mouths.

ANTONIO. Shylock, albeit I neither lend nor borrow
By taking nor by giving of excess,
Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend,
I'll break a custom. [To BASSANIO.] Is he yet possess'd
How much ye would ?

SHYLOCK. Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

ANTONIO. And for three months.

SHYLOCK. I had forgot ; three months , you told me so.
Well then, your bond ; and let me see But hear you ,
Methought you said you neither lend nor borrow
Upon advantage.

ANTONIO. I do never use it.

SHYLOCK. When Jacob graz'd his uncle Laban's sheep,—
This Jacob from our holy Abram was,
As his wise mother wrought in his behalf,
The third possessor : ay, he was the third,—

ANTONIO. And what of him ? did he take interest ?

SHYLOCK. No; not take interest; not, as you would say,
Directly interest: mark what Jacob did
When Laban and himself were compromis'd,
That all the eanlings that were streak'd and pied
Should fall as Jacob's hire.
This was a way to thrive, and he was blest:
And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.

ANTONIO. This was a venture, sir, that Jacob serv'd for;
A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
But sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of heaven.
Was this inserted to make interest good?
Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?

SHYLOCK. I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast:
But note me, signior.

ANTONIO. Mark you this, Bassanio,
The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul, producing holy witness,
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

SHYLOCK. Three thousand ducats; 'tis a good round sum.
Three months from twelve, then let me see the rate.

ANTONIO. Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you?

SHYLOCK. Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
In the Rialto you have rated me
About my moneys and my usances:
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
And spet upon my Jewish gaberdine,
And all for use of that which is mine own.
Well then, it now appears you need my help:
Go to then; you come to me, and you say,
'Shylock, we would have moneys': you say so;
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,
And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur

Over your threshold: moneys is your suit.
What should I say to you? Should I not say,
'Hath a dog money? Is it possible
A cur can lend three thousand ducats?' or
Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key,
With bated breath, and whispering humbleness,
Say this:—
'Fair sir, you spet on me on Wednesday last;
You spurn'd me such a day; another time
You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies
I'll lend you thus much moneys?'

ANTONIO. I am as like to call thee so again,
To spet on thee again, to spurn thee too.
If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
As to thy friends,—for when did friendship take
A breed for barren metal of his friend?—
But lend it rather to thine enemy;
Who if he break, thou mayst with better face
Exact the penalty.

SHYLOCK. Why, look you, how you storm!
I would be friends with you, and have your love,
Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with,
Supply your present wants, and take no doit
Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me:
This is kind I offer.

ANTONIO. This were kindness.

SHYLOCK. This kindness will I show.
Go with me to a notary, seal me there
Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,
If you repay me not on such a day,
In such a place, such sum or sums as are
Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit
Be nominated for an equal pound
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
In what part of your body pleaseth me.

ANTONIO. Content, i' faith: I'll seal to such a bond,
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

BASSANIO. You shall not seal to such a bond for me:
I'll rather dwell in my necessity.

ANTONIO. Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit it.

Within these two months, that 's a month before
This bond expires, I do expect return
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

SHYLOCK. O father Abram! what these Christians are,
Whose own hard dealing teaches them suspect
The thoughts of others. Pray you, tell me this;
If he should break his day, what should I gain
By the exaction of the forfeiture?
A pound of man's flesh, taken from a man,
Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats. I say,
To buy his favour, I extend this friendship:
If he will take it, so; if not, adieu:
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.

ANTONIO. Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

SHYLOCK. Then meet me forthwith at the notary's;
Give him direction for this merry bond,
And I will go and purse the ducats straight,
See to my house, left in the fearful guard
Of an unthrifty knave, and presently
I will be with you.

ANTONIO. Hie thee, gentle Jew. [Exit SHYLOCK
This Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.

BASSANIO. I like not fair terms and a villain's mind.

ANTONIO. Come on: in this there can be no dismay;
My ships come home a month before the day. [Exeunt.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.

Flourish of Cornets. Enter the PRINCE OF MOROCCO, *and his Followers;* PORTIA, NERISSA, *and Others of her Train.*

MOROCCO. Mislike me not for my complexion,
The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun,
To whom I am a neighbour and near bred.
Bring me the fairest creature northward born,
Where Phœbus' fire scarce thaws the icicles,
And let us make incision for your love,
To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.
I tell thee, lady, this aspect of mine
Hath fear'd the valiant: by my love, I swear
The best regarded virgins of our clime
Have lov'd it too: I would not change this hue,
Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen.

PORTIA. In terms of choice I am not solely led
By nice direction of a maiden's eyes;
Besides, the lottery of my destiny
Bars me the right of voluntary choosing:
But if my father had not scanted me
And hedg'd me by his wit, to yield myself
His wife who wins me by that means I told you,
Yourself, renowned prince, then stood as fair
As any comer I have look'd on yet
For my affection.

MOROCCO. Even for that I thank you:
Therefore, I pray you, lead me to the caskets
To try my fortune. By this scimitar,—
That slew the Sophy, and a Persian prince,
That won three fields of Sultan Solyman,—
I would outstare the sternest eyes that look,
Outbrave the heart most daring on the earth,
Pluck the young sucking cubs from the she-bear,
Yea, mock the lion when he roars for prey,
To win thee, lady. But, alas the while!
If Hercules and Lichas play at dice

Which is the better man, the greater throw
May turn by fortune from the weaker hand:
So is Alcides beaten by his page;
And so may I, blind fortune leading me,
Miss that which one unworthier may attain,
And die with grieving.

PORTIA. You must take your chance;
And either not attempt to choose at all,
Or swear before you choose, if you choose wrong,
Never to speak to lady afterward
In way of marriage: therefore be advis'd.

MOROCCO. Nor will not: come, bring me unto my chance.

PORTIA. First, forward to the temple: after dinner
Your hazard shall be made.

MOROCCO. Good fortune then!
To make me blest or cursed'st among men!

[*Cornets, and exeunt.*

SCENE II.—Venice. A Street.

Enter LAUNCELOT GOBBO.

LAUNCELOT. Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew my master. The fiend is at mine elbow, and tempts me, saying to me, 'Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo, good Launcelot,' or 'good Gobbo', or 'good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away'. My conscience says, 'No; take heed, honest Launcelot; take heed, honest Gobbo'; or, as aforesaid, 'honest Launcelot Gobbo; do not run; scorn running with thy heels.' Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack: 'Via!' says the fiend; 'away!' says the fiend; 'for the heavens, rouse up a brave mind,' says the fiend, 'and run.' Well, my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart, says very wisely to me, 'My honest friend Launcelot, being an honest man's son,'—or rather an honest woman's son;—for, indeed, my father did something smack, something grow to, he had a kind of taste;—well, my conscience says, 'Launcelot, budge not.' 'Budge,' says

the fiend. 'Budge not,' says my conscience. 'Conscience,' say I, 'you counsel well'; 'fiend,' say I, 'you counsel well': to be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master, who, God bless the mark! is a kind of devil; and, to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly, the Jew is the very devil incarnal; and, in my conscience, my conscience is but a kind of hard conscience, to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more friendly counsel: I will run, fiend; my heels are at your commandment; I will run.

Enter Old GOBBO, with a basket.

GOBBO. Master young man, you; I pray you, which is the way to Master Jew's?

LAUNCELOT. [Aside.] O heavens! this is my true-begotten father, who, being more than sand-blind, high-gravel blind, knows me not: I will try confusions with him.

GOBBO. Master young gentleman, I pray you, which is the way to Master Jew's?

LAUNCELOT. Turn up on your right hand at the next turning, but, at the next turning of all, on your left; marry, at the very next turning, turn of no hand, but turn down indirectly to the Jew's house.

GOBBO. By God's sonties, 'twill be a hard way to hit. Can you tell me whether one Launcelot, that dwells with him, dwell with him or no?

LAUNCELOT. Talk you of young Master Launcelot? [Aside.] Mark me now; now will I raise the waters. Talk you of young Master Launcelot?

GOBBO. No master, sir, but a poor man's son: his father, though I say it, is an honest, exceeding poor man, and, God be thanked, well to live.

LAUNCELOT. Well, let his father be what a' will, we talk of young Master Launcelot.

GOBBO. Your worship's friend, and Launcelot, sir.

LAUNCELOT. But I pray you, ergo, old man, ergo, I beseech you, talk you of young Master Launcelot?

GOBBO. Of Launcelot, an 't please your mastership.

LAUNCELOT. Ergo, Master Launcelot. Talk not of Master Launcelot, father; for the young gentleman,—according to Fates and Destinies and such odd sayings, the Sisters Three and such branches of learning,—is, indeed, deceased; or, as you would say in plain terms, gone to heaven.

GOBBO. Marry, God forbid! the boy was the very staff of my age, my very prop.

LAUNCELOT. [Aside.] Do I look like a cudgel or a hovel-post, a staff or a prop? Do you know me, father?

GOBBO. Alack the day! I know you not, young gentleman: but I pray you, tell me, is my boy,—God rest his soul!—alive or dead?

LAUNCELOT. Do you not know me, father?

GOBBO. Alack, sir, I am sand-blind; I know you not.

LAUNCELOT. Nay, indeed, if you had your eyes, you might fail of the knowing me: it is a wise father that knows his own child. Well, old man, I will tell you news of your son. Give me your blessing; truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long; a man's son may, but, in the end, truth will out.

GOBBO. Pray you, sir, stand up. I am sure you are not Launcelot, my boy.

LAUNCELOT. Pray you, let's have no more fooling about it, but give me your blessing: I am Launcelot, your boy that was, your son that is, your child that shall be.

GOBBO. I cannot think you are my son.

LAUNCELOT. I know not what I shall think of that; but I am Launcelot, the Jew's man, and I am sure Margery your wife is my mother.

GOBBO. Her name is Margery, indeed: I'll be sworn, if thou be Launcelot, thou art mine own flesh and blood. Lord worshipped might he be! what a beard hast thou got! thou hast got more hair on thy chin than Dobbin my thill-horse has on his tail.

LAUNCELOT. It should seem then that Dobbin's tail

grows backward: I am sure he had more hair on his tail than I have on my face, when I last saw him.

GOBBO. Lord! how art thou changed. How dost thou and thy master agree? I have brought him a present. How 'gree you now?

LAUNCELOT. Well, well: but, for mine own part, as I have set up my rest to run away, so I will not rest till I have run some ground. My master's a very Jew: give him a present! give him a halter: I am famished in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs. Father, I am glad you are come: give me your present to one Master Bassanio, who, indeed, gives rare new liveries. If I serve not him, I will run as far as God has any ground. O rare fortune! here comes the man: to him, father; for I am a Jew, if I serve the Jew any longer.

Enter BASSANIO, with LEONARDO, and other Followers.

BASSANIO. You may do so; but let it be so hasted that supper be ready at the very furthest by five of the clock. See these letters delivered; put the liveries to making; and desire Gratiano to come anon to my lodging. [Exit a Servant.

LAUNCELOT. To him, father.

GOBBO. God bless your worship!

BASSANIO. Gramercy! wouldst thou aught with me?

GOBBO. Here's my son, sir, a poor boy,—

LAUNCELOT. Not a poor boy, sir, but the rich Jew's man; that would, sir,—as my father shall specify,—

GOBBO. He hath a great infection, sir, as one would say, to serve—

LAUNCELOT. Indeed, the short and the long is, I serve the Jew, and have a desire, as my father shall specify,—

GOBBO. His master and he, saving your worship's reverence, are scarce cater-cousins,—

LAUNCELOT. To be brief, the very truth is that the Jew having done me wrong, doth cause me,—as my father, being, I hope, an old man, shall frutify unto you,—

GOBBO. I have here a dish of doves that I would bestow upon your worship, and my suit is,—

LAUNCELOT. In very brief, the suit is impertinent to myself, as your worship shall know by this honest old man; and, though I say it, though old man, yet poor man, my father.

BASSANIO. One speak for both. What would you?

LAUNCELOT. Serve you, sir.

GOBBO. That is the very defect of the matter, sir.

BASSANIO. I know thee well; thou hast obtain'd thy suit:
Shylock thy master spoke with me this day
And hath preferr'd thee, if it be preferment
To leave a rich Jew's service, to become
The follower of so poor a gentleman.

LAUNCELOT. The old proverb is very well parted between my master Shylock and you, sir: you have the grace of God, sir, and he hath enough.

BASSANIO. Thou speak'st it well. Go, father, with thy son.
Take leave of thy old master, and inquire
My lodging out. [To his followers.] Give him a livery
More guarded than his fellows': see it done.

LAUNCELOT. Father, in. I cannot get a service, no; I have ne'er a tongue in my head. Well, [Looking on his palm.] if any man in Italy have a fairer table which doth offer to swear upon a book, I shall have good fortune. Go to; here's a simple line of life: here's a small trifle of wives: alas! fifteen wives is nothing; a 'leven widows and nine maids is a simple coming-in for one man; and then to 'scape drowning thrice, and to be in peril of my life with the edge of a feather-bed; here are simple 'scapes. Well, if Fortune be a woman, she's a good wench for this gear. Father, come; I'll take my leave of the Jew in the twinkling of an eye. [Exeunt LAUNCELOT and Old GOBBO.

BASSANIO. I pray thee, good Leonardo, think on this:
These things being bought, and orderly bestow'd,
Return in haste, for I do feast to-night

My best-esteem'd acquaintance: hie thee, go.

LEONARDO. My best endeavours shall be done herein.

Enter GRATIANO.

GRATIANO. Where is your master?

LEONARDO. Yonder, sir, he walks. [Exit.

GRATIANO. Signior Bassanio!—

BASSANIO. Gratiano!

GRATIANO. I have a suit to you.

BASSANIO. You have obtain'd it.

GRATIANO. You must not deny me: I must go with you to Belmont.

BASSANIO. Why, then you must. But hear thee, Gratiano;
Thou art too wild, too rude and bold of voice;
Parts that become thee happily enough,
And in such eyes as ours appear not faults;
But where thou art not known, why, there they show
Something too liberal. Pray thee, take pain
To allay with some cold drops of modesty
Thy skipping spirit, lest, through thy wild behaviour,
I be misconstru'd in the place I go to,
And lose my hopes.

GRATIANO. Signior Bassanio, hear me:
If I do not put on a sober habit,
Talk with respect, and swear but now and then,
Wear prayer-books in my pocket, look demurely,
Nay more, while grace is saying, hood mine eyes
Thus with my hat, and sigh, and say 'amen';
Use all the observance of civility,
Like one well studied in a sad ostent
To please his grandam, never trust me more.

BASSANIO. Well, we shall see your bearing.

GRATIANO. Nay, but I bar to-night; you shall not gauge me
By what we do to-night.

BASSANIO. No, that were pity:
I would entreat you rather to put on
Your boldest suit of mirth, for we have friends
That purpose merriment. But fare you well:

I have some business.

GRATIANO. And I must to Lorenzo and the rest;
But we will visit you at supper-time. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.—The Same. A Room in SHYLOCK'S House.

Enter JESSICA and LAUNCELOT.

JESSICA. I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so:
Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil,
Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.
But fare thee well; there is a ducat for thee:
And, Launcelot, soon at supper shalt thou see
Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest:
Give him this letter; do it secretly;
And so farewell: I would not have my father
See me in talk with thee.

LAUNCELOT. Adieu! tears exhibit my tongue. Most beautiful pagan, most sweet Jew! If a Christian did not play the knave and get thee, I am much deceived. But, adieu! these foolish drops do somewhat drown my manly spirit: adieu!

JESSICA. Farewell, good Launcelot.

[Exit LAUNCELOT.

Alack, what heinous sin is it in me
To be asham'd to be my father's child!
But though I am a daughter to his blood,
I am not to his manners. O Lorenzo!
If thou keep promise, I shall end this strife
Become a Christian, and thy loving wife.

SCENE IV.—The Same. A Street.

Enter GRATIANO, LORENZO, SALARINO, and SALANIO.

LORENZO. Nay, we will slink away in supper-time,
Disguise us at my lodging, and return
All in an hour.

GRATIANO. We have not made good preparation.

SALARINO. We have not spoke us yet of torch-bearers.

SALANIO. 'Tis vile, unless it may be quaintly order'd,
And better, in my mind, not undertook.
LORENZO. 'Tis now but four o'clock: we have two hours
To furnish us.

Enter LAUNCELOT, with a letter.

Friend Launcelot, what's the news?
LAUNCELOT. An it shall please you to break up this, it shall seem to signify.
LORENZO. I know the hand: in faith, 'tis a fair hand;
And whiter than the paper it writ on
Is the fair hand that writ.
GRATIANO. Love news, in faith.
LAUNCELOT. By your leave, sir.
LORENZO. Whither goest thou?
LAUNCELOT. Marry, sir, to bid my old master, the Jew, to sup to-night with my new master, the Christian.
LORENZO. Hold here, take this: tell gentle Jessica
I will not fail her; speak it privately.
Go, gentlemen, [Exit LAUNCELOT.
Will you prepare you for this masque to-night?
I am provided of a torch-bearer.
SALARINO. Ay, marry, I'll be gone about it straight.
SALANIO. And so will I.
LORENZO. Meet me and Gratiano
At Gratiano's lodging some hour hence.
SALARINO. 'Tis good we do so.
[Exeunt SALARINO and SALANIO.
GRATIANO. Was not that letter from fair Jessica?
LORENZO. I must needs tell thee all. She hath directed
How I shall take her from her father's house:
What gold and jewels she is furnish'd with;
What page's suit she hath in readiness.
If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven,
It will be for his gentle daughter's sake;
And never dare misfortune cross her foot,
Unless she do it under this excus

That she is issue to a faithless Jew.
Come, go with me: peruse this as thou goest.
Fair Jessica shall be my torch-bearer. [Exeunt.

SCENE V.—The Same. Before SHYLOCK'S House

Enter SHYLOCK and LAUNCELOT.

SHYLOCK. Well, thou shalt see, thy eyes shall be thy judge,
The difference of old Shylock and Bassanio:—
What, Jessica!—thou shalt not gormandize,
As thou hast done with me;—What, Jessica!—
And sleep and snore, and rend apparel out—
Why, Jessica, I say!

LAUNCELOT. Why, Jessica!

SHYLOCK. Who bids thee call? I do not bid thee call.

LAUNCELOT. Your worship was wont to tell me that I could do nothing without bidding.

Enter JESSICA.

JESSICA. Call you? What is your will?

SHYLOCK. I am bid forth to supper, Jessica:
There are my keys. But wherefore should I go?
I am not bid for love; they flatter me:
But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon
The prodigal Christian.—Jessica, my girl,
Look to my house. I am right loath to go:
There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest,
For I did dream of money-bags to-night.

LAUNCELOT. I beseech you, sir, go: my young master doth expect your reproach.

SHYLOCK. So do I his.

LAUNCELOT. And they have conspired together: I will not say you shall see a masque; but if you do, then it was not for nothing that my nose fell a-bleeding on Black-Monday last, at six o'clock i' the morning, falling out that year on Ash-Wednesday was four year in the afternoon.

SHYLOCK. What! are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica:

Lock up my doors ; and when you hear the drum,
And the vile squealing of the wry-neck'd fife,
Clamber not you up to the casements then,
Nor thrust your head into the public street
To gaze on Christian fools with varnish'd faces,
But stop my house's ears, I mean my casements ;
Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter
My sober house. By Jacob's staff I swear
I have no mind of feasting forth to-night ;
But I will go. Go you before me, sirrah ;
Say I will come.

LAUNCELOT. I will go before, sir. Mistress, look out at window, for all this ;
There will come a Christian by,
Will be worth a Jewess' eye. [Exit LAUNCELOT.

SHYLOCK. What says that fool of Hagar's offspring, ha ?

JESSICA. His words were, 'Farewell, mistress' ; nothing else.

SHYLOCK. The patch is kind enough, but a huge feeder ;
Snail-slow in profit, and he sleeps by day
More than the wild cat : drones hive not with me ;
Therefore I part with him, and part with him
To one that I would have him help to waste
His borrow'd purse. Well, Jessica, go in :
Perhaps I will return immediately :
Do as I bid you ; shut doors after you :
'Fast bind, fast find,'
A proverb never stale in thrifty mind. [Exit.

JESSICA. Farewell ; and if my fortune be not crost,
I have a father, you a daughter, lost. [Exit.

SCENE VI.—The Same.

Enter GRATIANO and SALARINO, masqued.

GRATIANO. This is the penthouse under which Lorenzo
Desir'd us to make stand.

SALARINO. His hour is almost past.

GRATIANO. And it is marvel he out-dwells his hour,
For lovers ever run before the clock.

SALARINO. O! ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly
To seal love's bonds new-made, than they are wont
To keep obliged faith unforfeited!

GRATIANO. That ever holds: who riseth from a feast
With that keen appetite that he sits down?
Where is the horse that doth untread again
His tedious measures with the unbated fire
That he did pace them first? All things that are,
Are with more spirit chased than enjoy'd.
How like a younker or a prodigal
The scarfed bark puts from her native bay,
Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind!
How like the prodigal doth she return,
With over-weather'd ribs and ragged sails,
Lean, rent, and beggar'd by the strumpet wind!

SALARINO. Here comes Lorenzo: more of this hereafter.

Enter LORENZO.

LORENZO. Sweet friends, your patience for my long abode;
Not I, but my affairs, have made you wait:
When you shall please to play the thieves for wives,
I'll watch as long for you then. Approach;
Here dwells my father Jew. Ho! who's within?

Enter JESSICA above, in boy's clothes.

JESSICA. Who are you? Tell me, for more certainty,
Albeit I'll swear that I do know your tongue.

LORENZO. Lorenzo, and thy love.

JESSICA. Lorenzo, certain; and my love indeed,
For whom love I so much? And now who knows
But you, Lorenzo, whether I am yours?

LORENZO. Heaven and thy thoughts are witness that thou art.

JESSICA. Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains.
I am glad 'tis night, you do not look on me,

For I am much asham'd of my exchange ;
But love is blind, and lovers cannot see
The pretty follies that themselves commit ;
For if they could, Cupid himself would blush
To see me thus transformed to a boy.

LORENZO. Descend, for you must be my torch-bearer.

JESSICA. What! must I hold a candle to my shames ?
They in themselves, good sooth, are too-too light.
Why, 'tis an office of discovery, love,
And I should be obscur'd.

LORENZO. So are you, sweet,
Even in the lovely garnish of a boy.
But come at once ;
For the close night doth play the runaway,
And we are stay'd for at Bassanio's feast.

JESSICA. I will make fast the doors, and gild myself
With some more ducats, and be with you straight.

[Exit above.

GRATIANO. Now, by my hood, a Gentile, and no Jew.

LORENZO. Beshrew me, but I love her heartily ;
For she is wise, if I can judge of her,
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true,
And true she is, as she hath prov'd herself ;
And therefore, like herself, wise, fair, and true,
Shall she be placed in my constant soul.

Enter JESSICA.

What, art thou come ? On, gentlemen ; away !
Our masquing mates by this time for us stay.

[Exit with JESSICA and SALARINO.

Enter ANTONIO.

ANTONIO. Who 's there ?

GRATIANO. Signior Antonio !

ANTONIO. Fie, fie, Gratiano ! where are all the rest ?
'Tis nine o'clock ; our friends all stay for you.
No masque to-night : the wind is come about ;
Bassanio presently will go aboard :

I have sent twenty out to seek for you.

GRATIANO. I am glad on 't: I desire no more delight
Than to be under sail and gone to-night. [Exeunt.

SCENE VII.—Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.

Flourish of Cornets. Enter PORTIA, with the PRINCE OF MOROCCO, and their Trains.

PORTIA. Go, draw aside the curtains, and discover
The several caskets to this noble prince.
Now make your choice.

MOROCCO. The first, of gold, which this inscription bears:
'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.'
The second, silver, which this promise carries:
'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.'
This third, dull lead, with warning all as blunt:
'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.'
How shall I know if I do choose the right?

PORTIA. The one of them contains my picture, prince:
If you choose that, then I am yours withal.

MOROCCO. Some god direct my judgment! Let me see:
I will survey the inscriptions back again:
What says this leaden casket?
'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.'
Must give: For what? for lead? hazard for lead?
This casket threatens. Men that hazard all
Do it in hope of fair advantages:
A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross;
I'll then nor give nor hazard aught for lead.
What says the silver with her virgin hue?
'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.'
As much as he deserves! Pause there, Morocco,
And weigh thy value with an even hand.
If thou be'st rated by thy estimation,
Thou dost deserve enough; and yet enough
May not extend so far as to the lady:
And yet to be afeard of my deserving

Were but a weak disabling of myself.
As much as I deserve! Why, that 's the lady:
I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes,
In graces, and in qualities of breeding;
But more than these, in love I do deserve.
What if I stray'd no further, but chose here?
Let 's see once more this saying grav'd in gold:
'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.'
Why, that 's the lady: all the world desires her;
From the four corners of the earth they come,
To kiss this shrine, this mortal-breathing saint:
The Hyrcanian deserts and the vasty wilds
Of wide Arabia are as throughfares now
For princes to come view fair Portia:
The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head
Spits in the face of heaven, is no bar
To stop the foreign spirits, but they come,
As o'er a brook, to see fair Portia.
One of these three contains her heavenly picture.
Is 't like that lead contains her? 'Twere damnation
To think so base a thought; it were too gross
To rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave.
Or shall I think in silver she 's immur'd,
Being ten times undervalu'd to tried gold?
O sinful thought! Never so rich a gem
Was set in worse than gold. They have in England
A coin that bears the figure of an angel
Stamped in gold, but that 's insculp'd upon;
But here an angel in a golden bed
Lies all within. Deliver me the key:
Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!

PORTIA. There, take it, prince; and if my form lie there,
Then I am yours. [He unlocks the golden casket.

MOROCCO. O hell! what have we here?
A carrion Death, within whose empty eye
There is a written scroll. I'll read the writing.

All that glisters is not gold;
Often have you heard that told:

Many a man his life hath sold
But my outside to behold:
Gilded tombs do worms infold.
Had you been as wise as bold,
Young in limbs, in judgment old,
Your answer had not been inscroll'd:
Fare you well; your suit is cold.

Cold, indeed; and labour lost:
Then, farewell, heat, and welcome, frost!
Portia, adieu. I have too griev'd a heart
To take a tedious leave: thus losers part.

[Exit with his Train. Flourish of Cornets.

PORTIA. A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains: go.
Let all of his complexion choose me so. [Exeunt.

SCENE VIII.—Venice. A Street.

Enter SALARINO and SALANIO.

SALARINO. Why, man, I saw Bassanio under sail:
With him is Gratiano gone along;
And in their ship I'm sure Lorenzo is not.

SALANIO. The villain Jew with outcries rais'd the duke,
Who went with him to search Bassanio's ship.

SALARINO. He came too late, the ship was under sail:
But there the duke was given to understand
That in a gondola were seen together
Lorenzo and his amorous Jessica.
Besides, Antonio certified the duke
They were not with Bassanio in his ship.

SALANIO. I never heard a passion so confus'd,
So strange, outrageous, and so variable,
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets:
'My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
Justice! the law! my ducats, and my daughter!
A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,
Of double ducats, stol'n from me by my daughter!

And jewels! two stones, two rich and precious stones,
Stol'n by my daughter! Justice! find the girl! 21
She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats.'

SALARINO. Why, all the boys in Venice follow him,
Crying, his stones, his daughter, and his ducats. 24

SALANIO. Let good Antonio look he keep his day,
Or he shall pay for this.

SALARINO. Marry, well remember'd.
I reason'd with a Frenchman yesterday,
Who told me,—in the narrow seas that part
The French and English,—there miscarried
A vessel of our country richly fraught.
I thought upon Antonio when he told me,
And wish'd in silence that it were not his.

SALANIO. You were best to tell Antonio what you hear;
Yet do not suddenly, for it may grieve him.

SALARINO. A kinder gentleman treads not the earth.
I saw Bassanio and Antonio part: 36
Bassanio told him he would make some speed
Of his return: he answer'd 'Do not so;
Slubber not business for my sake, Bassanio,
But stay the very riping of the time;
And for the Jew's bond which he hath of me,
Let it not enter in your mind of love:
Be merry, and employ your chiefest thoughts
To courtship and such fair ostents of love
As shall conveniently become you there':
And even there, his eye being big with tears,
Turning his face, he put his hand behind him,
And with affection wondrous sensible
He wrung Bassanio's hand; and so they parted.

SALANIO. I think he only loves the world for him.
I pray thee, let us go and find him out
And quicken his embraced heaviness
With some delight or other.

SALARINO. Do we so.

SCENE IX.—Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.

Enter NERISSA, with a Servitor.

NERISSA. Quick, quick, I pray thee; draw the curtain straight:
The Prince of Arragon hath ta'en his oath
And comes to his election presently.

Flourish of Cornets. Enter the PRINCE OF ARRAGON, PORTIA, and their Trains.

PORTIA. Behold, there stands the caskets, noble prince:
If you choose that wherein I am contain'd,
Straight shall our nuptial rites be solemniz'd;
But if you fail, without more speech, my lord,
You must be gone from hence immediately.

ARRAGON. I am enjoin'd by oath to observe three things:
First, never to unfold to any one
Which casket 'twas I chose; next, if I fail
Of the right casket, never in my life
To woo a maid in way of marriage;
Lastly,
If I do fail in fortune of my choice,
Immediately to leave you and be gone.

PORTIA. To these injunctions every one doth swear
That comes to hazard for my worthless self.

ARRAGON. And so have I address'd me. Fortune now
To my heart's hope! Gold, silver, and base lead.
'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath':
You shall look fairer, ere I give or hazard.
What says the golden chest? ha! let me see:
'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.'
What many men desire! that 'many' may be meant
By the fool multitude, that choose by show,
Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach;
Which pries not to the interior, but, like the martlet,
Builds in the weather on the outward wall,
Even in the force and road of casualty.
I will not choose what many men desire,

Because I will not jump with common spirits
And rank me with the barbarous multitude.
Why, then to thee, thou silver treasure-house;
Tell me once more what title thou dost bear:
'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.'
And well said too; for who shall go about
To cozen fortune and be honourable
Without the stamp of merit? Let none presume
To wear an undeserved dignity.
O! that estates, degrees, and offices
Were not deriv'd corruptly, and that clear honour
Were purchas'd by the merit of the wearer.
How many then should cover that stand bare;
How many be commanded that command;
How much low peasantry would then be glean'd
From the true seed of honour; and how much honour
Pick'd from the chaff and ruin of the times
To be new varnish'd! Well, but to my choice:
'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.'
I will assume desert. Give me a key for this,
And instantly unlock my fortunes here.

[He opens the silver casket.

PORTIA. Too long a pause for that which you find there.

ARRAGON. What's here? the portrait of a blinking idiot,
Presenting me a schedule! I will read it.
How much unlike art thou to Portia!
How much unlike my hopes and my deservings!
'Who chooseth me shall have as much as he deserves.'
Did I deserve no more than a fool's head?
Is that my prize? are my deserts no better?

PORTIA. To offend, and judge, are distinct offices,
And of opposed natures.

ARRAGON. What is here?

The fire seven times tried this:
Seven times tried that judgment is
That did never choose amiss.
Some there be that shadows kiss;

Such have but a shadow's bliss:
There be fools alive, I wis,
Silver'd o'er; and so was this.
Take what wife you will to bed,
I will ever be your head:
So be gone, sir: you are sped.

Still more fool I shall appear
By the time I linger here:
With one fool's head I came to woo,
But I go away with two.
Sweet, adieu. I'll keep my oath,
Patiently to bear my wroth.

[Exit ARRAGON with his Train.

PORTIA. Thus hath the candle sing'd the moth.
O, these deliberate fools! when they do choose,
They have the wisdom by their wit to lose.

NERISSA. The ancient saying is no heresy:
'Hanging and wiving goes by destiny.'

PORTIA. Come, draw the curtain, Nerissa.

Enter a Servant.

SERVANT. Where is my lady?

PORTIA. Here; what would my lord?

SERVANT. Madam, there is alighted at your gate
A young Venetian, one that comes before
To signify the approaching of his lord;
From whom he bringeth sensible regreets,
To wit,—besides commends and courteous breath,—
Gifts of rich value. Yet I have not seen
So likely an embassador of love.
A day in April never came so sweet,
To show how costly summer was at hand,
As this fore-spurrer comes before his lord.

PORTIA. No more, I pray thee: I am half afeard
Thou wilt say anon he is some kin to thee,
Thou spend'st such high-day wit in praising him.
Come, come, Nerissa; for I long to see
Quick Cupid's post that comes so mannerly.

NERISSA. Bassanio, lord Love, if thy will it be!

[Exeunt.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—Venice. A Street.

Enter SALANIO and SALARINO.

SALANIO. Now, what news on the Rialto?

SALARINO. Why, yet it lives there unchecked that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wracked on the narrow seas; the Goodwins, I think they call the place; a very dangerous flat, and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried, as they say, if my gossip Report be an honest woman of her word.

SALANIO. I would she were as lying a gossip in that as ever knapped ginger, or made her neighbours believe she wept for the death of a third husband. But it is true,—without any slips of prolixity or crossing the plain highway of talk,—that the good Antonio, the honest Antonio,—O, that I had a title good enough to keep his name company!—

SALARINO. Come, the full stop.

SALANIO. Ha! what sayst thou? Why, the end is, he hath lost a ship.

SALARINO. I would it might prove the end of his losses.

SALANIO. Let me say 'amen' betimes, lest the devil cross my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew.

Enter SHYLOCK.

How now, Shylock! what news among the merchants?

SHYLOCK. You knew, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight.

SALARINO. That 's certain: I, for my part, knew the tailor that made the wings she flew withal.

SALANIO. And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was fledged; and then it is the complexion of them all to leave the dam.

SHYLOCK. She is damned for it.

SALARINO. That 's certain, if the devil may be her judge.

SHYLOCK. My own flesh and blood to rebel!

SALANIO. Out upon it, old carrion! rebels it at these years? 36

SHYLOCK. I say my daughter is my flesh and blood.

SALARINO. There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory; more between your bloods than there is between red wine and Rhenish. But tell us, do you hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or no? 42

SHYLOCK. There I have another bad match: a bankrupt, a prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto; a beggar, that used to come so smug upon the mart; let him look to his bond: he was wont to call me usurer; let him look to his bond: he was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy; let him look to his bond. 49

SALARINO. Why, I am sure, if he forfeit thou wilt not take his flesh: what 's that good for?

SHYLOCK. To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villany you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

Enter a Servant.

SERVANT. Gentlemen, my master Antonio is at his house, and desires to speak with you both.

SALARINO. We have been up and down to seek him.

Enter TUBAL.

SALANIO. Here comes another of the tribe: a third cannot be matched, unless the devil himself turn Jew.

[Exeunt SALANIO, SALARINO and Servant.

SHYLOCK. How now, Tubal! what news from Genoa? Hast thou found my daughter?

TUBAL. I often came where I did hear of her, but cannot find her.

SHYLOCK. Why there, there, there! a diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort! The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till now: two thousand ducats in that; and other precious, precious jewels. I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin! No news of them? Why, so: and I know not what's spent in the search: Why thou—loss upon loss! the thief gone with so much, and so much to find the thief; and no satisfaction, no revenge: nor no ill luck stirring but what lights on my shoulders; no sighs but of my breathing; no tears but of my shedding.

TUBAL. Yes, other men have ill luck too. Antonio, as I heard in Genoa,—

SHYLOCK. What, what, what? ill luck, ill luck?

TUBAL. —hath an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis.

SHYLOCK. I thank God! I thank God! Is it true? is it true?

TUBAL. I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped the wrack.

SHYLOCK. I thank thee, good Tubal. Good news, good news! ha, ha! Where? in Genoa?

TUBAL. Your daughter spent in Genoa, as I heard, one night, fourscore ducats.

SHYLOCK. Thou stick'st a dagger in me: I shall never see my gold again: fourscore ducats at a sitting! fourscore ducats!

TUBAL. There came divers of Antonio's creditors in my company to Venice, that swear he cannot choose but break.

SHYLOCK. I am very glad of it: I'll plague him; I'll torture him: I am glad of it.

TUBAL. One of them showed me a ring that he had of your daughter for a monkey.

SHYLOCK. Out upon her! Thou torturest me, Tubal: it was my turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor: I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys.

TUBAL. But Antonio is certainly undone.

SHYLOCK. Nay, that's true, that's very true. Go, Tubal, fee me an officer; bespeak him a fortnight before. I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit; for, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will. Go, go, Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue; go, good Tubal; at our synagogue, Tubal. [Exeunt.

SCENE II.—Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.

Enter BASSANIO, PORTIA, GRATIANO, NERISSA, and Attendants

PORTIA. I pray you, tarry: pause a day or two
Before you hazard; for, in choosing wrong,
I lose your company: therefore, forbear awhile.
There's something tells me, but it is not love,
I would not lose you; and you know yourself,
Hate counsels not in such a quality.
But lest you should not understand me well,—
And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought,—
I would detain you here some month or two
Before you venture for me. I could teach you
How to choose right, but then I am forsworn;
So will I never be: so may you miss me;
But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin,
That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes,
They have o'erlook'd me and divided me:

One half of me is yours, the other half yours,
Mine own, I would say; but if mine, then yours,
And so all yours. O! these naughty times
Put bars between the owners and their rights;
And so, though yours, not yours. Prove it so,
Let fortune go to hell for it, not I.
I speak too long; but 'tis to peise the time,
To eke it and to draw it out in length,
To stay you from election.

BASSANIO. Let me choose;
For as I am, I live upon the rack.

PORTIA. Upon the rack, Bassanio! then confess
What treason there is mingled with your love.

BASSANIO. None but that ugly treason of mistrust,
Which makes me fear th' enjoying of my love:
There may as well be amity and life
'Tween snow and fire, as treason and my love.

PORTIA. Ay, but I fear you speak upon the rack,
Where men enforced do speak anything.

BASSANIO. Promise me life, and I'll confess the truth.

PORTIA. Well then, confess, and live.

BASSANIO. 'Confess' and 'love'
Had been the very sum of my confession:
O happy torment, when my torturer
Doth teach me answers for deliverance!
But let me to my fortune and the caskets.

PORTIA. Away then! I am lock'd in one of them:
If you do love me, you will find me out.
Nerissa, and the rest, stand all aloof.
Let music sound while he doth make his choice;
Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like end,
Fading in music: that the comparison
May stand more proper, my eye shall be the stream
And watery death-bed for him. He may win;
And what is music then? then music is
Even as the flourish when true subjects bow
To a new-crowned monarch: such it is
As are those dulcet sounds in break of day
That creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear,
And summon him to marriage. Now he goes,

With no less presence, but with much more love,
Than young Alcides, when he did redeem
The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
To the sea-monster: I stand for sacrifice;
The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives,
With bleared visages, come forth to view
The issue of the exploit. Go, Hercules!
Live thou, I live: with much, much more dismay
I view the fight than thou that mak'st the fray.

[A Song, whilst BASSANIO comments on the caskets to himself.

Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart or in the head?
How begot, how nourished?
Reply, reply.
It is engender'd in the eyes,
With gazing fed; and fancy dies
In the cradle where it lies.
Let us all ring fancy's knell:
I'll begin it.—Ding, dong, bell.

ALL. Ding, dong, bell.

BASSANIO. So may the outward shows be least themselves:
The world is still deceiv'd with ornament.
In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt
But, being season'd with a gracious voice,
Obscures the show of evil? In religion,
What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text,
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?
There is no vice so simple but assumes
Some mark of virtue on his outward parts.
How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false
As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins
The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars,
Who, inward search'd, have livers white as milk;
And these assume but valour's excrement
To render them redoubted! Look on beauty,
And you shall see 'tis purchas'd by the weight:

Which therein works a miracle in nature,
Making them lightest that wear most of it:
So are those crisped snaky golden locks
Which make such wanton gambols with the wind,
Upon supposed fairness, often known
To be the dowry of a second head,
The skull that bred them, in the sepulchre.
Thus ornament is but the guiled shore
To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf
Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word,
The seeming truth which cunning times put on
To entrap the wisest. Therefore, thou gaudy gold,
Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee;
Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge
'Tween man and man: but thou, thou meagre lead,
Which rather threat'nest than dost promise aught,
Thy plainness moves me more than eloquence,
And here choose I: joy be the consequence!

PORTIA. [Aside.] How all the other passions fleet to air,
As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embrac'd despair,
And shuddering fear, and green-ey'd jealousy.
O love! be moderate; allay thy ecstasy;
In measure rain thy joy; scant this excess;
I feel too much thy blessing; make it less,
For fear I surfeit!

BASSANIO. What find I here?
[Opening the leaden casket.
Fair Portia's counterfeit! What demi-god
Hath come so near creation? Move these eyes?
Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,
Seem they in motion? Here are sever'd lips,
Parted with sugar breath; so sweet a bar
Should sunder such sweet friends. Here, in her hairs
The painter plays the spider, and hath woven
A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men
Faster than gnats in cobwebs: but her eyes!—
How could he see to do them? having made one,
Methinks it should have power to steal both his
And leave itself unfurnish'd: yet look, how far

The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow
In underprizing it, so far this shadow
Doth limp behind the substance. Here 's the scroll,
The continent and summary of my fortune.

You that choose not by the view,
Chance as fair and choose as true!
Since this fortune falls to you,
Be content and seek no new.
If you be well pleas'd with this
And hold your fortune for your bliss,
Turn you where your lady is
And claim her with a loving kiss.

A gentle scroll. Fair lady, by your leave; [Kissing her.
I come by note, to give and to receive.
Like one of two contending in a prize,
That thinks he hath done well in people's eyes,
Hearing applause and universal shout,
Giddy in spirit, still gazing in a doubt
Whether those peals of praise be his or no;
So, thrice-fair lady, stand I, even so,
As doubtful whether what I see be true,
Until confirm'd, sign'd, ratified by you.

PORTIA. You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
Such as I am: though for myself alone
I would not be ambitious in my wish,
To wish myself much better; yet, for you
I would be trebled twenty times myself;
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times
More rich;
That only to stand high in your account,
I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,
Exceed account: but the full sum of me
Is sum of nothing; which, to term in gross,
Is an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractis'd;
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn; happier than this,
She is not bred so dull but she can learn;
Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed,

As from her lord, her governor, her king.
Myself and what is mine to you and yours
Is now converted: but now I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,
This house, these servants, and this same myself
Are yours, my lord. I give them with this ring;
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love,
And be my vantage to exclaim on you.

BASSANIO. Madam, you have bereft me of all words,
Only my blood speaks to you in my veins;
And there is such confusion in my powers,
As, after some oration fairly spoke
By a beloved prince, there doth appear
Among the buzzing pleased multitude;
Where every something, being blent together,
Turns to a wild of nothing, save of joy,
Express'd and not express'd. But when this ring
Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence:
O! then be bold to say Bassanio's dead.

NERISSA. My lord and lady, it is now our time,
That have stood by and seen our wishes prosper,
To cry, good joy. Good joy, my lord and lady!

GRATIANO. My Lord Bassanio and my gentle lady,
I wish you all the joy that you can wish;
For I am sure you can wish none from me:
And when your honours mean to solemnize
The bargain of your faith, I do beseech you,
Even at that time I may be married too.

BASSANIO. With all my heart, so thou canst get a wife.

GRATIANO. I thank your lordship, you have got me one.
My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours:
You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid;
You lov'd, I lov'd; for intermission
No more pertains to me, my lord, than you.
Your fortune stood upon the caskets there,
And so did mine too, as the matter falls;

For wooing here until I sweat again,
And swearing till my very roof was dry
With oaths of love, at last, if promise last,
I got a promise of this fair one here
To have her love, provided that your fortune
Achiev'd her mistress.

PORTIA. Is this true, Nerissa?

NERISSA. Madam, it is, so you stand pleas'd withal.

BASSANIO. And do you, Gratiano, mean good faith?

GRATIANO. Yes, faith, my lord.

BASSANIO. Our feast shall be much honour'd in your marriage.

GRATIANO. But who comes here? Lorenzo and his infidel?
What! and my old Venetian friend, Salanio?

Enter LORENZO, JESSICA and SALANIO.

BASSANIO. Lorenzo, and Salanio, welcome hither,
If that the youth of my new interest here
Have power to bid you welcome. By your leave,
I bid my very friends and countrymen,
Sweet Portia, welcome.

PORTIA. So do I, my lord:
They are entirely welcome.

LORENZO. I thank your honour. For my part, my lord,
My purpose was not to have seen you here,
But meeting with Salanio by the way,
He did entreat me, past all saying nay,
To come with him along.

SALANIO. I did, my lord,
And I have reason for it. Signior Antonio
Commends him to you. [Gives BASSANIO a letter.

BASSANIO. Ere I ope his letter,
I pray you, tell me how my good friend doth.

SALANIO. Not sick, my lord, unless it be in mind;

Nor well, unless in mind: his letter there
Will show you his estate.

GRATIANO. Nerissa, cheer yon stranger; bid her welcome.
Your hand, Salanio. What's the news from Venice?
How doth that royal merchant, good Antonio?
I know he will be glad of our success;
We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece.

SALANIO. I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost.

PORTIA. There are some shrewd contents in yon same paper,
That steal the colour from Bassanio's cheek:
Some dear friend dead, else nothing in the world
Could turn so much the constitution
Of any constant man. What, worse and worse!
With leave, Bassanio; I am half yourself,
And I must freely have the half of anything
That this same paper brings you.

BASSANIO. O sweet Portia!
Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words
That ever blotted paper. Gentle lady,
When I did first impart my love to you,
I freely told you all the wealth I had
Ran in my veins, I was a gentleman:
And then I told you true; and yet, dear lady,
Rating myself at nothing, you shall see
How much I was a braggart. When I told you
My state was nothing, I should then have told you
That I was worse than nothing; for, indeed,
I have engag'd myself to a dear friend,
Engag'd my friend to his mere enemy,
To feed my means. Here is a letter, lady,
The paper as the body of my friend,
And every word in it a gaping wound,
Issuing life-blood. But is it true, Salanio?
Hath all his ventures fail'd? What, not one hit?
From Tripolis, from Mexico, and England,
From Lisbon, Barbary, and India?
And not one vessel 'scape the dreadful touch

Of merchant-marring rocks ?
SALANIO. Not one, my lord.
Besides, it should appear, that if he had
The present money to discharge the Jew,
He would not take it. Never did I know
A creature, that did bear the shape of man,
So keen and greedy to confound a man.
He plies the duke at morning and at night,
And doth impeach the freedom of the state,
If they deny him justice: twenty merchants,
The duke himself, and the magnificoes
Of greatest port, have all persuaded with him;
But none can drive him from the envious plea
Of forfeiture, of justice, and his bond.
JESSICA. When I was with him, I have heard him swear
To Tubal and to Chus, his countrymen,
That he would rather have Antonio's flesh
Than twenty times the value of the sum
That he did owe him; and I know, my lord,
If law, authority, and power deny not,
It will go hard with poor Antonio.
PORTIA. Is it your dear friend that is thus in trouble ?
BASSANIO. The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,
The best-condition'd and unwearied spirit
In doing courtesies, and one in whom
The ancient Roman honour more appears
Than any that draws breath in Italy.
PORTIA. What sum owes he the Jew ?
BASSANIO. For me, three thousand ducats.
PORTIA. What, no more ?
Pay him six thousand, and deface the bond;
Double six thousand, and then treble that,
Before a friend of this description
Shall lose a hair thorough Bassanio's fault.
First go with me to church and call me wife,
And then away to Venice to your friend;
For never shall you lie by Portia's side
With an unquiet soul. You shall have gold

To pay the petty debt twenty times over:
When it is paid, bring your true friend along.
My maid Nerissa and myself meantime,
Will live as maids and widows. Come, away!
For you shall hence upon your wedding-day.
Bid your friends welcome, show a merry cheer;
Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear.
But let me hear the letter of your friend.

BASSANIO. 'Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit; and since, in paying it, it is impossible I should live, all debts are cleared between you and I, if I might but see you at my death. Notwithstanding, use your pleasure: if your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter.'

PORTIA. O love, dispatch all business, and be gone!

BASSANIO. Since I have your good leave to go away,
I will make haste; but, till I come again,
No bed shall e'er be guilty of my stay,
Nor rest be interposer 'twixt us twain. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.—Venice. A Street.

Enter SHYLOCK, SALARINO, ANTONIO, and Gaoler.

SHYLOCK. Gaoler, look to him: tell not me of mercy;
This is the fool that lent out money gratis:
Gaoler, look to him.

ANTONIO. Hear me yet, good Shylock.

SHYLOCK. I'll have my bond; speak not against my bond:
I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond.
Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause,
But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs:
The duke shall grant me justice. I do wonder,
Thou naughty gaoler, that thou art so fond
To come abroad with him at his request.

ANTONIO. I pray thee, hear me speak.

SHYLOCK. I'll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak:
I'll have my bond, and therefore speak no more.
I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool,
To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield
To Christian intercessors. Follow not;
I'll have no speaking; I will have my bond. [Exit.

SALARINO. It is the most impenetrable cur
That ever kept with men.

ANTONIO. Let him alone:
I'll follow him no more with bootless prayers.
He seeks my life; his reason well I know.
I oft deliver'd from his forfeitures
Many that have at times made moan to me;
Therefore he hates me.

SALARINO. I am sure the duke
Will never grant this forfeiture to hold.

ANTONIO. The duke cannot deny the course of law:
For the commodity that strangers have
With us in Venice, if it be denied,
'Twill much impeach the justice of the state;
Since that the trade and profit of the city
Consisteth of all nations. Therefore, go:
These griefs and losses have so bated me,
That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh
To-morrow to my bloody creditor.
Well, gaoler, on. Pray God, Bassanio come
To see me pay his debt, and then I care not! [Exeunt.

SCENE IV.—Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.

Enter PORTIA, NERISSA, LORENZO, JESSICA, and BALTHAZAR.

LORENZO. Madam, although I speak it in your presence,
You have a noble and a true conceit
Of god-like amity; which appears most strongly
In bearing thus the absence of your lord.
But if you knew to whom you show this honour,
How true a gentleman you send relief,

How dear a lover of my lord your husband,
I know you would be prouder of the work
Than customary bounty can enforce you.

PORTIA. I never did repent for doing good,
Nor shall not now: for in companions
That do converse and waste the time together,
Whose souls do bear an equal yoke of love,
There must be needs a like proportion
Of lineaments, of manners, and of spirit;
Which makes me think that this Antonio,
Being the bosom lover of my lord,
Must needs be like my lord. If it be so,
How little is the cost I have bestow'd
In purchasing the semblance of my soul
From out the state of hellish cruelty!
This comes too near the praising of myself;
Therefore, no more of it: hear other things.
Lorenzo, I commit into your hands
The husbandry and manage of my house
Until my lord's return: for mine own part,
I have toward heaven breath'd a secret vow
To live in prayer and contemplation,
Only attended by Nerissa here,
Until her husband and my lord's return.
There is a monastery two miles off,
And there will we abide. I do desire you
Not to deny this imposition,
The which my love and some necessity
Now lays upon you.

LORENZO. Madam, with all my heart;
I shall obey you in all fair commands.

PORTIA. My people do already know my mind,
And will acknowledge you and Jessica
In place of Lord Bassanio and myself.
So fare you well till we shall meet again.

LORENZO. Fair thoughts and happy [illegible] attend on you!

JESSICA. I wish your ladyship all heart's content.

PORTIA. I thank you for your wish, and am well pleas'd

To wish it back on you: fare you well, Jessica.
[*Exeunt* JESSICA *and* LORENZO.

Now, Balthazar,
As I have ever found thee honest-true,
So let me find thee still. Take this same letter,
And use thou all the endeavour of a man
In speed to Padua: see thou render this
Into my cousin's hand, Doctor Bellario;
And, look, what notes and garments he doth give thee,
Bring them, I pray thee, with imagin'd speed
Unto the traject, to the common ferry
Which trades to Venice. Waste no time in words,
But get thee gone: I shall be there before thee.

BALTHAZAR. Madam, I go with all convenient speed.
[*Exit.*

PORTIA. Come on, Nerissa; I have work in hand
That you yet know not of: we'll see our husbands
Before they think of us.

NERISSA. Shall they see us?

PORTIA. They shall, Nerissa; but in such a habit
That they shall think we are accomplished
With that we lack. I'll hold thee any wager,
When we are both accoutred like young men,
I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,
And wear my dagger with the braver grace,
And speak between the change of man and boy
With a reed voice, and turn two mincing steps
Into a manly stride, and speak of frays
Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies,
How honourable ladies sought my love,
Which I denying, they fell sick and died:
I could not do withal; then I'll repent,
And wish, for all that, that I had not kill'd them:
And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell,
That men shall swear I have discontinu'd school
Above a twelvemonth. I have within my mind
A thousand raw tricks of these bragging Jacks,
Which I will practise.

But come: I'll tell thee all my whole device
When I am in my coach, which stays for us
At the park gate; and therefore haste away,
For we must measure twenty miles to-day. [Exeunt.

SCENE V.—The Same. A Garden.

Enter LAUNCELOT and JESSICA.

LAUNCELOT. Yes, truly; for, look you, the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children; therefore, I promise you, I fear you. I was always plain with you, and so now I speak my agitation of the matter: therefore be of good cheer; for, truly, I think you are damned. There is but one hope in it that can do you any good, and that is but a kind of base hope neither.

JESSICA. And what hope is that, I pray thee?

LAUNCELOT. Marry, you may partly hope that you are not the Jew's daughter.

JESSICA. That were a kind of base hope, indeed: so the sins of my mother should be visited upon me.

LAUNCELOT. Truly then I fear you are damned both by father and mother: thus when I shun Scylla, your father, I fall into Charybdis, your mother: well, you are gone both ways.

JESSICA. I shall be saved by my husband; he hath made me a Christian.

LAUNCELOT. Truly the more to blame he: we were Christians enow before; e'en as many as could well live one by another. This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs: if we grow all to be pork-eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money.

JESSICA. I'll tell my husband, Launcelot, what you say: here he comes.

Enter LORENZO.

LORENZO. I shall grow jealous of you shortly, Launcelot, if you thus get my wife into corners.

JESSICA. Nay, you need not fear us, Lorenzo:

Launcelot and I are out. He tells me flatly, there is no mercy for me in heaven, because I am a Jew's daughter: and he says you are no good member of the commonwealth, for, in converting Jews to Christians, you raise the price of pork.

LORENZO. I think the best grace of wit will shortly turn into silence, and discourse grow commendable in none only but parrots. Go in, sirrah: bid them prepare for dinner.

LAUNCELOT. That is done, sir; they have all stomachs.

LORENZO. Goodly Lord, what a wit-snapper are you! then bid them prepare dinner.

LAUNCELOT. That is done too, sir; only, 'cover' is the word.

LORENZO. Will you cover, then, sir?

LAUNCELOT. Not so, sir, neither; I know my duty.

LORENZO. Yet more quarrelling with occasion! Wilt thou show the whole wealth of thy wit in an instant? I pray thee, understand a plain man in his plain meaning: go to thy fellows; bid them cover the table, serve in the meat, and we will come in to dinner.

LAUNCELOT. For the table, sir, it shall be served in; for the meat, sir, it shall be covered; for your coming in to dinner, sir, why, let it be as humours and conceits shall govern. [Exit.

LORENZO. O dear discretion, how his words are
suited!
The fool hath planted in his memory
An army of good words: and I do know
A many fools, that stand in better place,
Garnish'd like him, that for a tricksy word
Defy the matter. How cheer'st thou, Jessica?
And now, good sweet, say thy opinion;
How dost thou like the Lord Bassanio's wife?

JESSICA. Past all expressing. It is very meet,
The Lord Bassanio live an upright life,
For, having such a blessing in his lady,

He finds the joys of heaven here on earth
And if on earth he do not mean it, then
In reason he should never come to heaven.
Why, if two gods should play some heavenly match,
And on the wager lay two earthly women,
And Portia one, there must be something else
Pawn'd with the other, for the poor rude world
Hath not her fellow.

LORENZO. Even such a husband
Hast thou of me as she is for a wife.

JESSICA. Nay, but ask my opinion too of that.

LORENZO. I will anon; first, let us go to dinner.

JESSICA. Nay, let me praise you while I have a stomach.

LORENZO. No, pray thee, let it serve for table-talk;
Then howsoe'er thou speak'st, 'mong other things
I shall digest it.

JESSICA. Well, I'll set you forth. [Exeunt.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—Venice. A Court of Justice.

Enter the DUKE: the Magnificoes; ANTONIO, BASSANIO, GRATIANO, SALARINO, SALANIO, and Others.

DUKE. What, is Antonio here?

ANTONIO. Ready, so please your Grace.

DUKE. I am sorry for thee: thou art come to answer
A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch
Uncapable of pity, void and empty
From any dram of mercy.

ANTONIO. I have heard
Your Grace hath ta'en great pains to qualify
His rigorous course; but since he stands obdurate,

And that no lawful means can carry me
Out of his envy's reach, I do oppose
My patience to his fury, and am arm'd
To suffer with a quietness of spirit
The very tyranny and rage of his.

DUKE. Go one, and call the Jew into the court.

SALARINO. He 's ready at the door: he comes, my lord.

Enter SHYLOCK.

DUKE. Make room, and let him stand before our face.
Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too,
That thou but lead'st this fashion of thy malice
To the last hour of act; and then, 'tis thought
Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange
Than is thy strange-apparent cruelty;
And where thou now exact'st the penalty,—
Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,—
Thou wilt not only loose the forfeiture,
But, touch'd with human gentleness and love,
Forgive a moiety of the principal;
Glancing an eye of pity on his losses,
That have of late so huddled on his back,
Enow to press a royal merchant down,
And pluck commiseration of his state
From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint,
From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never train'd
To offices of tender courtesy.
We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

SHYLOCK. I have possess'd your Grace of what I purpose;
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn
To have the due and forfeit of my bond:
If you deny it, let the danger light
Upon your charter and your city's freedom.
You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have
A weight of carrion flesh than to receive
Three thousand ducats: I'll not answer that:
But say it is my humour: is it answer'd?
What if my house be troubled with a rat,
And I be pleas'd to give ten thousand ducats

To have it ban'd ? What, are you answer'd yet ?
Some men there are love not a gaping pig ;
Some, that are mad if they behold a cat ;
And others, when the bagpipe sings i' the nose,
Cannot contain themselves : for affection,
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
Of what it likes, or loathes. Now, for your answer :
As there is no firm reason to be render'd,
Why he cannot abide a gaping pig ;
Why he, a harmless necessary cat ;
Why he, a wauling bagpipe ; but of force
Must yield to such inevitable shame
As to offend, himself being offended ;
So can I give no reason, nor I will not,
More than a lodg'd hate and a certain loathing
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
A losing suit against him. Are you answer'd ?

BASSANIO. This is no answer, thou unfeeling man,
To excuse the current of thy cruelty.

SHYLOCK. I am not bound to please thee with my answer.

BASSANIO. Do all men kill the things they do not love ?

SHYLOCK. Hates any man the thing he would not kill ?

BASSANIO. Every offence is not a hate at first.

SHYLOCK. What ! wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice ?

ANTONIO. I pray you, think you question with the Jew :
You may as well go stand upon the beach,
And bid the main flood bate his usual height ;
You may as well use question with the wolf
Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb ;
You may as well forbid the mountain pines
To wag their high tops, and to make no noise
When they are fretted with the gusts of heaven ;
You may as well do anything most hard,
As seek to soften that—than which what 's harder ?—
His Jewish heart : therefore, I do beseech you,

Make no more offers, use no further means;
But with all brief and plain conveniency,
Let me have judgment, and the Jew his will.

BASSANIO. For thy three thousand ducats here is six.

SHYLOCK. If every ducat in six thousand ducats
Were in six parts and every part a ducat,
I would not draw them; I would have my bond.

DUKE. How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

SHYLOCK. What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?
You have among you many a purchas'd slave,
Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules,
You use in abject and in slavish parts,
Because you bought them: shall I say to you,
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?
Why sweat they under burdens? let their beds
Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates
Be season'd with such viands? You will answer:
'The slaves are ours': so do I answer you:
The pound of flesh which I demand of him,
Is dearly bought; 'tis mine and I will have it.
If you deny me, fie upon your law!
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.
I stand for judgment: answer; shall I have it?

DUKE. Upon my power I may dismiss this court,
Unless Bellario, a learned doctor,
Whom I have sent for to determine this,
Come here to-day.

SALARINO. My lord, here stays without
A messenger with letters from the doctor,
New come from Padua.

DUKE. Bring us the letters: call the messenger.

BASSANIO. Good cheer, Antonio! What, man, courage yet!
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones, and all,
Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood.

ANTONIO. I am a tainted wether of the flock,
Meetest for death: the weakest kind of fruit

Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me:
You cannot better be employ'd, Bassanio,
Than to live still, and write mine epitaph.

Enter NERISSA, dressed like a lawyer's clerk.

DUKE. Came you from Padua, from Bellario?

NERISSA. From both, my lord. Bellario greets your Grace. [Presents a letter.

BASSANIO. Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?

SHYLOCK. To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there.

GRATIANO. Not on thy sole, but on thy soul, harsh Jew,
Thou mak'st thy knife keen; but no metal can,
No, not the hangman's axe, bear half the keenness
Of thy sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce thee?

SHYLOCK. No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

GRATIANO. O, be thou damn'd, inexecrable dog!
And for thy life let justice be accus'd.
Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith
To hold opinion with Pythagoras,
That souls of animals infuse themselves
Into the trunks of men: thy currish spirit
Govern'd a wolf, who, hang'd for human slaughter,
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,
And whilst thou lay'st in thy unhallow'd dam,
Infus'd itself in thee; for thy desires
Are wolfish, bloody, starv'd, and ravenous.

SHYLOCK. Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond,
Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud:
Repair thy wit, good youth, or it will fall
To cureless ruin. I stand here for law.

DUKE. This letter from Bellario doth commend
A young and learned doctor to our court.
Where is he?

NERISSA. He attendeth here hard by,
To know your answer, whether you'll admit him.

DUKE. With all my heart: some three or four of you
Go give him courteous conduct to this place.
Meantime, the court shall hear Bellario's letter.

CLERK. 'Your Grace shall understand that at the receipt of your letter I am very sick; but in the instant that your messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a young doctor of Rome; his name is Balthazar. I acquainted him with the cause in controversy between the Jew and Antonio the merchant: we turned o'er many books together: he is furnished with my opinion; which, bettered with his own learning,—the greatness whereof I cannot enough commend,—comes with him, at my importunity, to fill up your Grace's request in my stead. I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation, for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish his commendation.'

DUKE. You hear the learn'd Bellario, what he writes:
And here, I take it, is the doctor come.

Enter PORTIA, dressed like a doctor of laws.

Give me your hand. Came you from old Bellario?
PORTIA. I did, my lord.
DUKE. You are welcome: take your place.
Are you acquainted with the difference
That holds this present question in the court?
PORTIA. I am informed throughly of the cause.
Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?
DUKE. Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.
PORTIA. Is your name Shylock?
SHYLOCK. Shylock is my name.
PORTIA. Of a strange nature is the suit you follow;
Yet in such rule that the Venetian law
Cannot impugn you as you do proceed.
[To ANTONIO.] You stand within his danger, do you not?
ANTONIO. Ay, so he says.
PORTIA. Do you confess the bond?

ANTONIO. I do.
PORTIA. Then must the Jew be merciful.
SHYLOCK. On what compulsion must I? tell me that. 181
PORTIA. The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd; 184
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power, 188
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings, 192
It is an attribute to God himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much
To mitigate the justice of thy plea,
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.
SHYLOCK. My deeds upon my head! I crave the law,
The penalty and forfeit of my bond.
PORTIA. Is he not able to discharge the money?
BASSANIO. Yes, here I tender it for him in the court;
Yea, twice the sum: if that will not suffice,
I will be bound to pay it ten times o'er,
On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart.
If this will not suffice, it must appear
That malice bears down truth. And, I beseech you,
Wrest once the law to your authority: 213
To do a great right, do a little wrong,
And curb this cruel devil of his will.
PORTIA. It must not be. There is no power in Venice 216

Can alter a decree established:
'Twill be recorded for a precedent,
And many an error by the same example
Will rush into the state. It cannot be.

SHYLOCK. A Daniel come to judgment! yea, a Daniel!
O wise young judge, how I do honour thee!

PORTIA. I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

SHYLOCK. Here 'tis, most reverend doctor; here it is.

PORTIA. Shylock, there 's thrice thy money offer'd thee.

SHYLOCK. An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven:
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?
No, not for Venice.

PORTIA. Why, this bond is forfeit;
And lawfully by this the Jew may claim
A pound of flesh to be by him cut off
Nearest the merchant's heart. Be merciful:
Take thrice thy money; bid me tear the bond.

SHYLOCK. When it is paid according to the tenour.
It doth appear you are a worthy judge;
You know the law, your exposition
Hath been most sound: I charge you by the law,
Whereof you are a well-deserving pillar,
Proceed to judgment: by my soul I swear
There is no power in the tongue of man
To alter me. I stay here on my bond.

ANTONIO. Most heartily I do beseech the court
To give the judgment.

PORTIA. Why then, thus it is:
You must prepare your bosom for his knife.

SHYLOCK. O noble judge! O excellent young man!

PORTIA. For, the intent and purpose of the law
Hath full relation to the penalty,
Which here appeareth due upon the bond.

SHYLOCK. 'Tis very true! O wise and upright judge!
How much more elder art thou than thy looks!

PORTIA. Therefore lay bare your bosom.

SHYLOCK. Ay, 'his breast'

So says the bond:—doth it not, noble judge?—
'Nearest his heart': those are the very words.

PORTIA. It is so. Are there balance here to weigh
The flesh?

SHYLOCK. I have them ready.

PORTIA. Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,
To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.

SHYLOCK. Is it so nominated in the bond?

PORTIA. It is not so express'd; but what of that?
'Twere good you do so much for charity.

SHYLOCK. I cannot find it: 'tis not in the bond.

PORTIA. You, merchant, have you anything to say?

ANTONIO. But little: I am arm'd and well prepar'd.
Give me your hand, Bassanio: fare you well!
Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you;
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind
Than is her custom: it is still her use
To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,
To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow
An age of poverty; from which lingering penance
Of such a misery doth she cut me off.
Commend me to your honourable wife:
Tell her the process of Antonio's end;
Say how I lov'd you, speak me fair in death;
And, when the tale is told, bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio had not once a love.
Repent not you that you shall lose your friend,
And he repents not that he pays your debt;
For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
I'll pay it instantly with all my heart.

BASSANIO. Antonio, I am married to a wife
Which is as dear to me as life itself;
But life itself, my wife, and all the world,
Are not with me esteem'd above thy life:
I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all,
Here to this devil, to deliver you.

PORTIA. Your wife would give you little thanks for that,
If she were by to hear you make the offer.

GRATIANO. I have a wife, whom, I protest, I love:
I would she were in heaven, so she could
Entreat some power to change this currish Jew.
NERISSA. 'Tis well you offer it behind her back;
The wish would make else an unquiet house.
SHYLOCK. These be the Christian husbands! I have a daughter;
Would any of the stock of Barabbas
Had been her husband rather than a Christian!
We trifle time; I pray thee, pursue sentence.
PORTIA. A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine:
The court awards it, and the law doth give it.
SHYLOCK. Most rightful judge!
PORTIA. And you must cut this flesh from off his breast:
The law allows it, and the court awards it.
SHYLOCK. Most learned judge! A sentence! come, prepare!
PORTIA. Tarry a little: there is something else.
This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;
The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh':
Then take thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh;
But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate
Unto the state of Venice.
GRATIANO. O upright judge! Mark, Jew: O learned judge!
SHYLOCK. Is that the law?
PORTIA. Thyself shalt see the act;
For, as thou urgest justice, be assur'd
Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desir'st.
GRATIANO. O learned judge! Mark, Jew: a learned judge!
SHYLOCK. I take this offer then: pay the bond thrice,
And let the Christian go.
BASSANIO. Here is the money.
PORTIA. Soft!

The Jew shall have all justice; soft! no haste:—
He shall have nothing but the penalty.

GRATIANO. O Jew! an upright judge, a learned judge!

PORTIA. Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.
Shed thou no blood; nor cut thou less, nor more,
But just a pound of flesh: if thou tak'st more,
Or less, than a just pound, be it but so much
As makes it light or heavy in the substance,
Or the division of the twentieth part
Of one poor scruple, nay, if the scale do turn
But in the estimation of a hair,
Thou diest and all thy goods are confiscate.

GRATIANO. A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew!
Now, infidel, I have thee on the hip.

PORTIA. Why doth the Jew pause? take thy forfeiture.

SHYLOCK. Give me my principal, and let me go.

BASSANIO. I have it ready for thee; here it is.

PORTIA. He hath refus'd it in the open court:
He shall have merely justice, and his bond.

GRATIANO. A Daniel, still say I; a second Daniel!
I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.

SHYLOCK. Shall I not have barely my principal?

PORTIA. Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture,
To be so taken at thy peril, Jew.

SHYLOCK. Why, then the devil give him good of it!
I'll stay no longer question.

PORTIA. Tarry, Jew:
The law hath yet another hold on you.
It is enacted in the laws of Venice,
If it be prov'd against an alien
That by direct or indirect attempts
He seek the life of any citizen,
The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive
Shall seize one half his goods; the other half
Comes to the privy coffer of the state;
And the offender's life lies in the mercy
Of the duke only, 'gainst all other voice.

In which predicament, I say, thou stand'st;
For it appears by manifest proceeding,
That indirectly and directly too
Thou hast contrived against the very life
Of the defendant; and thou hast incurr'd
The danger formerly by me rehears'd.
Down therefore and beg mercy of the duke.

GRATIANO. Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang thyself:
And yet, thy wealth being forfeit to the state,
Thou hast not left the value of a cord;
Therefore thou must be hang'd at the state's charge.

DUKE. That thou shalt see the difference of our spirits,
I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it.
For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's;
The other half comes to the general state,
Which humbleness may drive into a fine.

PORTIA. Ay, for the state; not for Antonio.

SHYLOCK. Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that:
You take my house when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house; you take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live.

PORTIA. What mercy can you render him, Antonio?

GRATIANO. A halter gratis; nothing else, for God's sake!

ANTONIO. So please my lord the duke, and all the court,
To quit the fine for one half of his goods,
I am content; so he will let me have
The other half in use, to render it,
Upon his death, unto the gentleman
That lately stole his daughter:
Two things provided more, that, for this favour,
He presently become a Christian;
The other, that he do record a gift,
Here in the court, of all he dies possess'd,
Unto his son Lorenzo, and his daughter.

DUKE. He shall do this, or else I do recant

The pardon that I late pronounced here.

PORTIA. Art thou contented, Jew? what dost thou say?

SHYLOCK. I am content.

PORTIA. Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

SHYLOCK. I pray you give me leave to go from hence:
I am not well. Send the deed after me,
And I will sign it.

DUKE. Get thee gone, but do it.

GRATIANO. In christening thou shalt have two godfathers;
Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more,
To bring thee to the gallows, not the font.

[Exit SHYLOCK.

DUKE. Sir, I entreat you home with me to dinner.

PORTIA. I humbly do desire your Grace of pardon:
I must away this night toward Padua,
And it is meet I presently set forth.

DUKE. I am sorry that your leisure serves you not.
Antonio, gratify this gentleman,
For, in my mind, you are much bound to him.

[Exeunt DUKE, Magnificoes, and Train.

BASSANIO. Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend
Have by your wisdom been this day acquitted
Of grievous penalties; in lieu whereof,
Three thousand ducats, due unto the Jew,
We freely cope your courteous pains withal.

ANTONIO. And stand indebted, over and above,
In love and service to you evermore.

PORTIA. He is well paid that is well satisfied;
And I, delivering you, am satisfied,
And therein do account myself well paid:
My mind was never yet more mercenary.
I pray you, know me when we meet again:
I wish you well, and so I take my leave.

BASSANIO. Dear sir, of force I must attempt you further:
Take some remembrance of us, as a tribute,
Not as a fee. Grant me two things, I pray you,
Not to deny me, and to pardon me.

PORTIA. You press me far, and therefore I will yield.
[To ANTONIO.] Give me your gloves, I'll wear them for your sake;
[To BASSANIO.] And for your love, I'll take this ring from you.
Do not draw back your hand; I'll take no more;
And you in love shall not deny me this.

BASSANIO. This ring, good sir? alas! it is a trifle;
I will not shame myself to give you this.

PORTIA. I will have nothing else but only this;
And now methinks I have a mind to it.

BASSANIO. There's more depends on this than on the value.
The dearest ring in Venice will I give you,
And find it out by proclamation:
Only for this, I pray you, pardon me.

PORTIA. I see, sir, you are liberal in offers:
You taught me first to beg, and now methinks
You teach me how a beggar should be answer'd.

BASSANIO. Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife;
And, when she put it on, she made me vow
That I should never sell nor give nor lose it.

PORTIA. That 'scuse serves many men to save their gifts.
An if your wife be not a mad-woman,
And know how well I have deserv'd the ring,
She would not hold out enemy for ever,
For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you.
[Exeunt PORTIA and NERISSA.

ANTONIO. My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring:
Let his deservings and my love withal
Be valu'd 'gainst your wife's commandment.

BASSANIO. Go, Gratiano; run and overtake him;
Give him the ring, and bring him, if thou canst,
Unto Antonio's house. Away! make haste.
[Exit GRATIANO.
Come, you and I will thither presently,
And in the morning early will we both
Fly toward Belmont. Come, Antonio. [Exeunt.

SCENE II.—The Same. A Street.

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA.

PORTIA. Inquire the Jew's house out, give him this deed,
And let him sign it. We'll away to-night,
And be a day before our husbands home:
This deed will be well welcome to Lorenzo.

Enter GRATIANO.

GRATIANO. Fair sir, you are well o'erta'en.
My Lord Bassanio upon more advice
Hath sent you here this ring, and doth entreat
Your company at dinner.
PORTIA. That cannot be:
His ring I do accept most thankfully;
And so, I pray you, tell him: furthermore,
I pray you, show my youth old Shylock's house.
GRATIANO. That will I do.
NERISSA. Sir, I would speak with you.
[Aside to PORTIA.] I'll see if I can get my husband's ring.
Which I did make him swear to keep for ever.
PORTIA. Thou mayst, I warrant. We shall have old swearing
That they did give the rings away to men;
But we'll outface them, and outswear them too.
Away! make haste: thou know'st where I will tarry.
NERISSA. Come, good sir, will you show me to this house? [Exeunt.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—Belmont. The Avenue to PORTIA'S House.

Enter LORENZO and JESSICA.

LORENZO. The moon shines bright: in such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees
And they did make no noise, in such a night
Troilus methinks mounted the Troyan walls,
And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,

Where Cressid lay that night.

JESSICA. In such a night
Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew,
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
And ran dismay'd away.

LORENZO. In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea-banks, and waft her love
To come again to Carthage.

JESSICA. In such a night
Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs
That did renew old Æson.

LORENZO. In such a night
Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew,
And with an unthrift love did run from Venice,
As far as Belmont.

JESSICA. In such a night
Did young Lorenzo swear he lov'd her well,
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith—
And ne'er a true one.

LORENZO. In such a night
Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,
Slander her love, and he forgave it her.

JESSICA. I would out-night you, did no body come;
But, hark! I hear the footing of a man.

Enter STEPHANO.

LORENZO. Who comes so fast in silence of the night?

STEPHANO. A friend.

LORENZO. A friend! what friend? your name, I pray you, friend.

STEPHANO. Stephano is my name; and I bring word
My mistress will before the break of day
Be here at Belmont: she doth stray about
By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays
For happy wedlock hours.

LORENZO. Who comes with her?

STEPHANO. None, but a holy hermit and her maid.
I pray you, is my master yet return'd?

LORENZO. He is not, nor we have not heard from him.
But go we in, I pray thee, Jessica,
And ceremoniously let us prepare
Some welcome for the mistress of the house.

Enter LAUNCELOT.

LAUNCELOT. Sola, sola! wo ha, ho! sola, sola!
LORENZO. Who calls?
LAUNCELOT. Sola! did you see Master Lorenzo? Master Lorenzo! sola, sola!
LORENZO. Leave hollaing, man; here.
LAUNCELOT. Sola! where? where?
LORENZO. Here.
LAUNCELOT. Tell him there 's a post come from my master, with his horn full of good news: my master will be here ere morning. [Exit.
LORENZO. Sweet soul, let 's in, and there expect their coming.
And yet no matter; why should we go in?
My friend Stephano, signify, I pray you,
Within the house, your mistress is at hand;
And bring your music forth into the air. [Exit STEPHANO.
How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
...e will we sit, and let the sounds of music
...ep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
...ome the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica: look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There 's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Enter Musicians.

Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn:
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,
And draw her home with music. [Music.

JESSICA. I am never merry when I hear sweet music.
LORENZO. The reason is, your spirits are attentive:
For do but note a wild and wanton herd,
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,
Which is the hot condition of their blood;
If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
Or any air of music touch their ears,
You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze
By the sweet power of music: therefore the poet
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods;
Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature.
The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA, at a distance.

PORTIA. That light we see is burning in my hall.
How far that little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.
NERISSA. When the moon shone, we did not see the candle.
PORTIA. So doth the greater glory dim the less:
A substitute shines brightly as a king
Until a king be by, and then his state
Empties itself, as doth an inland brook
Into the main of waters. Music! hark!
NERISSA. It is your music, madam, of the house.
PORTIA. Nothing is good, I see, without respect:
Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.
NERISSA. Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.
PORTIA. The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark
When neither is attended, and I think
The nightingale, if she should sing by day,
When every goose is cackling, would be thought

No better a musician than the wren.
How many things by season season'd are
To their right praise and true perfection!
Peace, ho! the moon sleeps with Endymion,
And would not be awak'd! [Music ceases.
LORENZO. That is the voice,
Or I am much deceiv'd, of Portia.
PORTIA. He knows me, as the blind man knows the cuckoo,
By the bad voice.
LORENZO. Dear lady, welcome home.
PORTIA. We have been praying for our husbands' welfare,
Which speed, we hope, the better for our words.
Are they return'd?
LORENZO. Madam, they are not yet;
But there is come a messenger before,
To signify their coming.
PORTIA. Go in, Nerissa:
Give order to my servants that they take
No note at all of our being absent hence;
Nor you, Lorenzo; Jessica, nor you. [A tucket sounds.
LORENZO. Your husband is at hand; I hear his trumpet:
We are no tell-tales, madam; fear you not.
PORTIA. This night methinks is but the daylight sick;
It looks a little paler: 'tis a day,
Such as the day is when the sun is hid.

Enter BASSANIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO, and their Followers.

BASSANIO. We should hold day with the Antipodes,
If you would walk in absence of the sun.
PORTIA. Let me give light, but let me not be light;
For a light wife doth make a heavy husband,
And never be Bassanio so for me:
But God sort all! You are welcome home, my lord.
BASSANIO. I thank you, madam. Give welcome to my friend:
This is the man, this is Antonio,

To whom I am so infinitely bound.
PORTIA. You should in all sense be much bound to him,
For, as I hear, he was much bound for you.
ANTONIO. No more than I am well acquitted of.
PORTIA. Sir, you are very welcome to our house:
It must appear in other ways than words,
Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy.
GRATIANO. [To NERISSA.] By yonder moon I swear you do me wrong;
In faith, I gave it to the judge's clerk:
Would he were dead that had it, for my part,
Since you do take it, love, so much at heart.
PORTIA. A quarrel, ho, already! what 's the matter?
GRATIANO. About a hoop of gold, a paltry ring
That she did give me, whose poesy was
For all the world like cutlers' poetry
Upon a knife, 'Love me, and leave me not.'
NERISSA. What talk you of the posy, or the value?
You swore to me, when I did give it you,
That you would wear it till your hour of death,
And that it should lie with you in your grave:
Though not for me, yet for your vehement oaths,
You should have been respective and have kept it.
Gave it a judge's clerk! no, God 's my judge,
The clerk will ne'er wear hair on 's face that had it.
GRATIANO. He will, an if he live to be a man.
NERISSA. Ay, if a woman live to be a man.
GRATIANO. Now, by this hand, I gave it to a youth,
A kind of boy, a little scrubbed boy,
No higher than thyself, the judge's clerk,
A prating boy, that begg'd it as a fee:
I could not for my heart deny it him.
PORTIA. You were to blame,—I must be plain with you,—
To part so slightly with your wife's first gift;
A thing stuck on with oaths upon your finger,
And riveted so with faith unto your flesh.
I gave my love a ring and made him swear
Never to part with it; and here he stands,

I dare be sworn for him he would not leave it
Nor pluck it from his finger for the wealth
That the world masters. Now, in faith, Gratiano,
You give your wife too unkind a cause of grief:
An 'twere to me, I should be mad at it.

BASSANIO. [Aside.] Why, I were best to cut my left hand off,
And swear I lost the ring defending it.

GRATIANO. My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away
Unto the judge that begg'd it, and indeed
Deserv'd it too; and then the boy, his clerk,
That took some pains in writing, he begg'd mine;
And neither man nor master would take aught
But the two rings.

PORTIA. What ring gave you, my lord?
Not that, I hope, that you receiv'd of me.

BASSANIO. If I could add a lie unto a fault,
I would deny it; but you see my finger
Hath not the ring upon it; it is gone.

PORTIA. Even so void is your false heart of truth.
By heaven, I will never be your wife
Until I see the ring.

NERISSA. Nor I be yours,
Till I again see mine.

BASSANIO. Sweet Portia,
If you did know to whom I gave the ring,
If you did know for whom I gave the ring,
And would conceive for what I gave the ring,
And how unwillingly I left the ring,
When naught would be accepted but the ring,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.

PORTIA. If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honour to contain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring.
What man is there so much unreasonable,
If you had pleas'd to have defended it
With any terms of zeal, wanted the modesty
To urge the thing held as a ceremony?
Nerissa teaches me what to believe:

I'll die for 't but some woman had the ring.
BASSANIO. No, by my honour, madam, by my soul,
No woman had it; but a civil doctor,
Which did refuse three thousand ducats of me,
And begg'd the ring, the which I did deny him,
And suffer'd him to go displeas'd away;
Even he that did uphold the very life
Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady?
I was enforc'd to send it after him;
I was beset with shame and courtesy;
My honour would not let ingratitude
So much besmear it. Pardon me, good lady,
For, by these blessed candles of the night,
Had you been there, I think you would have begg'd
The ring of me to give the worthy doctor.
PORTIA. Let not that doctor e'er come near my house.
Since he hath got the jewel that I lov'd,
And that which you did swear to keep for me,
I will become as liberal as you;
I'll not deny him anything I have.
NERISSA. Nor I his clerk; therefore be well advis'd
How you do leave me to mine own protection.
GRATIANO. Well, do you so: let me not take him, then;
For if I do, I'll mar the young clerk's pen.
ANTONIO. I am the unhappy subject of these quarrels.
PORTIA. Sir, grieve not you; you are welcome notwithstanding.
BASSANIO. Portia, forgive me this enforced wrong;
And in the hearing of these many friends,
I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes,
Wherein I see myself,—
PORTIA. Mark you but that!
In both my eyes he doubly sees himself;
In each eye, one: swear by your double self,
And there 's an oath of credit.
BASSANIO. Nay, but hear me:
Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear

I never more will break an oath with thee.

ANTONIO. I once did lend my body for his wealth,
Which, but for him that had your husband's ring,
Had quite miscarried: I dare be bound again,
My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
Will never more break faith advisedly.

PORTIA. Then you shall be his surety. Give him this,
And bid him keep it better than the other.

ANTONIO. Here, Lord Bassanio; swear to keep this ring.

BASSANIO. By heaven! it is the same I gave the doctor!

PORTIA. I had it of him: pardon me, Bassanio.

GRATIANO. Why, this is like the mending of high ways
In summer, where the ways are fair enough!

PORTIA. You are all amaz'd:
Here is a letter; read it at your leisure;
It comes from Padua, from Bellario:
There you shall find that Portia was the doctor,
Nerissa, there, her clerk: Lorenzo here
Shall witness I set forth as soon as you
And even but now return'd; I have not yet
Enter'd my house. Antonio, you are welcome;
And I have better news in store for you
Than you expect: unseal this letter soon;
There you shall find three of your argosies
Are richly come to harbour suddenly.
You shall not know by what strange accident
I chanced on this letter.

ANTONIO. I am dumb.

BASSANIO. Were you the doctor and I knew you not?

GRATIANO. Were you the clerk and still I knew you not?

ANTONIO. Sweet lady, you have given me life and living;
For here I read for certain that my ships
Are safely come to road.

PORTIA. How now, Lorenzo!
My clerk hath some good comforts too for you.
NERISSA. Ay, and I'll give them him without a fee.
There do I give to you and Jessica,
From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift,
After his death, of all he dies possess'd of.
LORENZO. Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way
Of starved people.
PORTIA. It is almost morning,
And yet I am sure you are not satisfied
Of these events at full. Let us go in;
And charge us there upon inter'gatories,
And we will answer all things faithfully.
GRATIANO. Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing
So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring. [Exeunt

NOTES

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

SHYLOCK: either (1) from Hebrew Schaul, with suffix -oc, and so corresponding to Latin Saul-us; or (2) from Hebrew Salah, Gen. x. 24. JESSICA: from Iscah or Jescah, Gen. xi. 29. Other Jewish names of personages in the play, Tubal, Leah, Chus, are all taken from the Old Testament; it is therefore better not to seek for an Italian origin of the names Shylock and Jessica, as some have tried to. PORTIA: possibly from the name of Cato's daughter (I. i. 166). NERISSA: the dark-haired (contrasted with the fair-haired Portia). LAUNCELOT GOBBO: the first name is nearly the same as Launce, a brother clown in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*; the second is an Italian name, and means 'hump-backed', as old Gobbo was no doubt meant to be represented. There was a stone figure called the Gobbo di Rialto in Venice, supporting on its bent back a pillar 'from which the laws of the Republic were proclaimed'. This name is one of the proofs offered of Shakespeare's personal acquaintance with the city of Venice.

ACT I

SCENE I

ll. 1–7. The cause of Antonio's sadness has been variously explained: (1) it is the melancholy of the rich and prosperous, who have tasted the joys that wealth can give, and have found that their fruition leads at last to a detection of their hollowness: such rich and melancholy men are Jacques in *As You Like It*, the Duke in *Twelfth Night*, and Hamlet; (2) it is a presentiment of impending calamity, because 'all his fortunes are at sea', l. 177; (3) it is a sign of a changeful, unbusinesslike nature in a man of business, preparing us for the strange action of a merchant in signing a hazardous bond out of extravagant

regard for a friend; (4) Gratiano's explanation is given in the note on l. 74. Whatever the cause, this sadness in prosperity offers a striking contrast to Antonio's calm deportment in adversity.

l. 3. *caught it*: as if it was an infection. *came by it*: acquired it.

l. 4. What its *nature* is and what its *origin*.

l. 5. I have *yet* to learn: I do not *yet* know.

l. 6. Sadness turns me into such a stupid creature. *want-wit*: idiot, one who 'does not know', l. 1.

l. 7. *ado*: difficulty; originally 'ado' meant to ('a'-) do, to have to do, to deal with.

ll. 8–56. Salarino and Salanio are both types of false friendship; they are a contrast to Antonio, the type of true friendship, and an intermediate stage to Shylock, the type of undisguised enmity. Salarino has a more vivid imagination and a more familiar way than Salanio, who is deferential (he 'sirs' Antonio); but the purpose of both is to make Antonio divulge whether it is news of losses at sea that makes him sad, with the object, no doubt, of spreading the news among his brother merchants.

l. 8. *ocean*: to be scanned as three syllables.

l. 9. *argosies*: large, ocean-going merchant-ships; also spelt *ragusy* in the singular, and derived from Ragusa, an Adriatic port, whose name formerly was spelt Aragusa, which accounts for the other spelling, and which again gave rise to a supposed derivation from *Argo*, the ship in which Jason undertook the most ancient ocean voyage for merchandise on record—the Argonautic expedition for the Golden Fleece. *portly*: (1) swelling before the wind; (2) with a fat paunch: once in Europe, as still in parts of the East, what is now laughed at as a deformity used to be looked upon as a visible proof of wealth. The swelling sails are here a proof of the rich cargoes.

l. 10. Either (1) there should be a comma after 'burghers', since 'on the flood' qualifies 'argosies', not 'burghers'; or (2) instead of 'on', we should read 'of'; since 'burghers of the flood' is a metaphor for 'argosies'.

l. 11. *pageants . . . sea*: models of ships that used to be carried about on land during festive processions.

l. 12. *petty traffickers*: small vessels engaged in the coasting trade.

l. 13. The small vessels pitch and toss out at sea, while the larger merchantmen have a steady motion; this, in

the text, is turned into a pretty fancy. *do them reverence*: bow low to them; a curtsy would not be so low as a reverence, if any distinction is needed.

l. 14. *they*: the 'petty traffickers'. *them*: the 'argosies'; whether in reality the bigger or the smaller vessels would be the quicker sailers, it is evident that here the argosies must be the slower sailers, for rapid motion would detract from the portliness of their carriage. It is not correct to take 'they' as meaning the argosies, and 'them' the 'traffickers', and to explain l. 14 as meaning the rocking of the latter when they fell into the wake of the former, for one does not curtsy and do reverence to a superior *behind his back*. 'Portly sail' and 'woven wings' seem to indicate inferior and superior sailing powers respectively.

l. 15. *sir*: it is by slight touches like this that Shakespeare differentiates characters otherwise similar; both these men are secret ill-wishers of Antonio, but the one is deferential to his superior in wealth, the other affects the familiar tone of an equal on the strength of (professed) friendship. *such venture forth*: cargoes of such value out at sea. In the history of trade to distant parts, such as that of the Levant and East India Companies, the title of 'merchant-adventurers' often occurs, and was natural enough in days when marine insurance, as now understood, did not exist.

l. 16. *affections*: feelings for things dear to me.

l. 17. *abroad*: at sea with my ships. *still*: always, unceasingly.

l. 18. *where sits*: in what direction blows; *steady* blowing of the wind is meant by 'sits'.

l. 19. *Peering . . . piers*: a play on words. *roads*: roadsteads.

l. 21. *out of doubt*: undoubtedly, certainly.

ll. 22, 23. My anxiety would exaggerate a plate of soup at dinner into a sea, and my breath (with which I cooled the soup) into a storm. *to*: into.

ll. 25, 26. I could not see the sand run in the hour-glass, without thinking, &c. *sandy*: the termination -y here, of course, has not its modern meaning. *but*: a contraction of 'by-out', and analogous to 'with-out' in form, as it is here in meaning.

l. 27. Salarino's words here point to his being the owner of only *one* merchant-ship, as contrasted with Antonio,

the owner of several. *wealthy*: laden with a rich cargo. *Andrew*: this is the name of his ship suggested, probably, by the name of the Genoese admiral Andrea Doria. *dock'd*: wrecked; grim irony upon the ordinary meaning—placed in *dry* docks for *repairs*.

l. 28. *Vailing*: lowering; a shortened form of M.E. 'avail' or 'avale' in its literal sense of valley-ward (Lat. *ad vallem*), and different from modern 'avail', to be of use (Lat. *valere*). *top*: top-mast, rather than that portion of the lowermost masts that are called tops in nautical language.

l. 29. *kiss*: how vividly does this word and 'gentle' (l. 32) endow the ship with life and sensibility! *burial*: burial-place, grave, i.e. the quicksand.

l. 32. *touching but*: but touching, if it merely touches. *gentle*: which the mere touch of the rude finger of the rock will shatter; the strongly built ship is a mere egg-shell when so touched.

l. 33. *spices*: in Antonio's days, which were the days of the commercial greatness of Venice, these would be the spices from 'Araby the Blest', brought to the Levant by the overland route, and thence shipped in Venetian merchantmen. In Shakespeare's days, when, owing to the discovery of the Cape route, Venetian greatness had decayed, these would be the spices from the Moluccas—the Ternate and Tidore of *Paradise Lost*. *silks*: coming from China, similarly by one or other of the two routes mentioned above; here the older route must obviously be referred to.

ll. 35, 36. *this*: so much; with the gesture of out-stretched hands. *now . . . now*: just before and just after the wreck. *nothing*: with the gesture of snapping his fingers.

ll. 36–8. The general sense is: can I possibly think of this without feeling sad?

l. 36. *thought*: mind, faculty of thinking.

l. 37. *thought*: feeling; the first 'thought' is the general mental power, the second 'thought' is the particular mental operation of that power in this specific case. It cannot be correct to explain, as some do, the first 'thought' as meaning care, anxiety, though this meaning occurs in Shakespeare elsewhere.

l. 38. *bechanc'd*: if it happened.

l. 39. *tell not me*: don't tell me that it can be otherwise.

I know: spoken in a tone pointedly meant to draw Antonio out.

l. 40. *to think*: in thinking.

ll. 41–5. Antonio sees through the design of this false friend and guards himself against it with a reply that is partly true (l. 42) and partly false (l. 44); to a true friend he tells the whole truth (l. 178).

l. 42. *one bottom*: one ship (as yours are, Salarino); see l. 27 n.

ll. 43, 44. This is not true, for otherwise Antonio should have been able to pay off Shylock. *is*: (substantive verb) depends. *present year*: voyages to and fro between Europe and the East would in those days take something like a year.

ll. 45, 46. Antonio concludes pointedly with this curt sentence, and the baffled Salarino tries to conceal his disappointment with a jest. Antonio's reply to this jest is that of the middle-aged bachelor. As such, Antonio was probably the more attached to his younger friend Bassanio than he would have been had he been a husband and the father of a family.

l. 50. *Janus*: the oath on the name of this two-headed Roman god is appropriate, because he describes two kinds of 'strange fellows', one with a laughing, the other with a sour face.

l. 51. *in her time*: ever since she has been employed in this work of 'framing' i.e. fashioning, human beings; the word 'frame' as verb and substantive formerly meant 'to create' and 'creation'.

l. 52. *peep . . . eyes*: look with eyes half-shut with laughter; the reader may remember such a face in Hogarth's *Laughing Faces*.

l. 53. Either (1) the comma is to be after 'laugh': talking parrots, carried about by street musicians as, later, monkeys were by organ-grinders, would no doubt be taught to laugh mechanically at the music without knowing why or at what they laughed; so do this kind of men laugh, without rhyme or reason, at anything; or (2) the comma is to be after 'parrots': these men laugh mechanically at anything, as parrots do; but 'bag-piper' is not a very apposite word for anything that should *not* give cause for laughter.

l. 54. *other*: others (pl.). *aspect*: accented on the second syllable.

l. 55. The same picture of Hogarth's shows this manner of laughing too.

l. 56. *Nestor*: so irresistible is the jest, that even Nestor, who had lived 'three ages of men' and was the oldest and therefore presumably the gravest of the Greek chiefs before Troy, could not resist it!

ll. 57–118. The two summer friends of Antonio, nettled at their failure to get news out of him about the state of his affairs, immediately on the entry of these three true friends of his, assume a tone of sneering coldness, due to a mean-souled jealousy; for they are conscious that Antonio holds the three new arrivals in higher estimation. Of these three also, two are aware of Antonio's higher regard for the third, but they are not, therefore, jealous of him. One of them notices his sadness too, and administers a rebuke unmistakably sincere in its tone and quite free from any ulterior motive as that evinced by the two false friends in their rebuke. Antonio's reply to Salanio and Salarino was courteous, but cold and guarded; to Gratiano it is warm and open, with a laughing promise to alter his sad looks.

l. 57. *comes*: the verb is often in the singular in Elizabethan grammar, when its nominatives follow it, as here.

l. 59. *better company*: uttered with a sneer, as is 'worthier friends' in l. 61.

l. 61. *prevented*: anticipated; a common Elizabethan meaning.

ll. 62–4. Antonio, with some slight indignation, speaks in the *positive* degree, refraining from making comparisons, as the two had sneeringly made; and he gives a colourless reason of his own why they depart, thus tacitly ignoring the invidious reason *they* had given.

l. 64. *occasion*: opportunity.

l. 65–7. There is cold formality in the words 'my good lords' that makes Bassanio express surprise at their behaving as if they were strangers, not friends. There is a pause after each sentence in his speech, during which this surprise grows greater and greater.

l. 66. *when . . . laugh*: i. e. why do you look serious and distant? Why do you not laugh and joke with us as you have been accustomed to? *say, when*: expresses impatience at their unchanged looks and unbroken silence.

l. 67. *you . . . strange*: you behave as if you were

strangers to us. *must . . . so*: must you leave us with this strange look on your faces ?

l. 68. You, it seems, are not at leisure at present, and we too are not at leisure. The insinuation is that Bassanio's time is going to be wholly taken up with Antonio.

ll. 69–72. Lorenzo, also knowing of Antonio's greater friendship for Bassanio, offers to leave them together: but there is not a tinge of that ill-will the other two had shown, and instead of taking his leave at once as those two had done, he lingers with Gratiano and has a little chat with the two friends before leaving, only to meet again at dinner time.

l. 69. Scan thus: Mỳ Lórd | Bàssán | io sínce | you have fóund | Àntón | io.

l. 73. *look not well*: intentional double meaning: (1) look unwell, look sad; (2) look unwisely on things; the next line explains how.

l. 74. You have too much regard for the world and its good opinion of you.

l. 75. *it . . . it*: the world, i. e. the world's good opinion. *do buy . . . care*: acquire it at too high a cost: meaning that Antonio has sacrificed enjoyment of life, and made himself miserable over this ambition of his to stand high in the world's estimation. This, then, is Gratiano's view of the cause of Antonio's sadness: he is devoured by an ambition for an honourable reputation among his fellows, as Shylock is by a craving for money.

l. 77. I do not over-estimate the world and its opinion, as you think, but take it at its real value and for what it is worth.

l. 79. Supply 'to be' after 'mine'. *sad*: Antonio intends a double meaning: (1) serious, grave; (2) dejected, sorrowful, both (1) and (2) referring merely to his present feelings: we, the readers, can see a further meaning, (3) tragic, as the sequel nearly turns out to be. *Let . . . fool*: if you will play the serious part, let me play the cheerful part. Gratiano proceeds to play this part in the orthodox character of the stage fool in the old comedies, and uses the privilege it gives him to rebuke his friend.

l. 80. *old*: of old age. Let the wrinkles of old age come from laughing rather than from care and anxiety.

ll. 81, 82. If I had to choose between the two evils of

a liver heated through jolly good-fellowship and a heart cooled towards my friends. I would choose the former: of course reproachfully implying that Antonio had chosen the latter. The hot liver and the cold heart are here two diseases, as it were, according to the old classification of diseases into 'hot' and 'cold'. *mortifying groans*: another piece of Elizabethan pathology: every sigh heaved was believed to dry up so many drops of blood, and so to shorten life.

ll. 83, 84. Why should you, a living man of flesh and blood, be as cold to your friends, as if you were a statue of stone? The warm blood must here be taken as impelling men to the warmth of friendship. In the *living* grandfather there would still be some little warmth left in old age: Antonio, says Gratiano, has not even that much warmth towards his friends, but is as cold towards them as the dead grandfather's *statue* would be to the touch. *alabaster*: a kind of stone much used for monuments.

ll. 85, 86. *sleep . . . wakes*: be listless. *creep . . . jaundice*: jaundice comes on slowly and is due to a diseased liver: so far Elizabethan and modern pathology are agreed, but they differ in this that the former makes 'peevishness', i. e. low spirits and a bad temper, to be the cause, while the latter makes it to be the effect, of a bad liver: but, to be sure, mind and body react on each other, and the doctors of to-day might still hold that the state of the emotions when violently stirred *may* cause this bodily disease. *what*: somewhat, something. The colloquialism is still commonly used.

l. 87. The ring of sincerity in these words is unmistakable: contrast this with the feigned solicitude of those two other men.

ll. 88, 89. There are a class of men who put on a fixed, unchanging expression of gravity. *cream and mantle*: the metaphors are from cream forming on the surface of milk and scum forming on the surface of stagnant water.

l. 90. Supply 'who' before 'do'. *wilful stillness entertain*: maintain an obstinate silence.

l. 91. *opinion of*: reputation for.

l. 92. *conceit*: thought, from vb. to conceive (to think).

l. 93. *As who*: construction either (1) as if one, or (2) as (i. e. like) one who, or (3) as any one. The last is a M.E. construction, and is the least likely here, the second is

a French construction, and is the most probable. *Sir Oracle*: a person whose pronouncements are infallible: the 'Sir' shows pompous self-sufficiency, and is the antithesis of 'dog' (l. 94).

l. 94. When I deliver my opinion let no fellow dare to voice his: let all listen to it in silence.

l. 96. *therefore*: is strictly superfluous, since it merely repeats what is meant by 'for saying nothing' in l. 97.

ll. 97–9. Construction: either (1) read '*when*' and supply '*it*' or '*they*' before '*would*'; or (2) read '*who*' instead of '*when*'. If '*it*' is supplied under (1) then the antecedent is 'their speaking', inferred from 'if they should speak'. Meaning: these men would be thought to be wise if only they did *not* speak but remained silent; whereas if they broke silence and spoke, they would be found out to be so foolish that those who heard them would call them fools, and by so doing would risk damnation in the next world. The reference is to Matt. v. 22, 'Whosoever shall say (to his brother) "thou fool" shall be in danger of hell fire.' The antecedent of '*them*' is '*brothers*' (l. 99), i.e. '*these*' (l. 95) or '*they*' (l. 98).

l. 101. Gratiano's condemnation of grave and taciturn people as being fools at bottom, is more an apology for his own lively and talkative disposition than a well-placed rebuke to Antonio for being sad. *melancholy bait*: bait of melancholy: 'mélanchóly' is equally strongly accented on the first syllable and the penultimate.

l. 102. *fool-gudgeon*: this little fish is easily caught; hence, this reputation for wisdom is easily got (and worth little when got). *opinion*: here four syllables: in l. 91 it was three syllables, giving a hypersyllabic pentameter.

l. 104. *exhortation*: a hit, probably, at the long-winded sermons of Shakespeare's time.

ll. 105–7. Lorenzo laughingly puts himself in the same category as Antonio, but his is an enforced silence due to Gratiano's loquacity.

l. 108. *moe*: more: both are comparatives in M.E. and A.S., but 'moe' implied number, 'more', size, e.g. 'the rhinoceros is more than the elephant' (as an old writer ignorantly says).

l. 110. *for this gear*: because of what you have said about silent people. *gear*: matter, business: used indefinitely in various senses that the context alone determines.

l. 111. *Thanks*: i. e. for becoming a convert to my preaching.

l. 112. *neat's*: of an ox.

l. 113. Have his words any sense in them really? 'Now' had then the same expletive force that it has in current English, and the reading 'new' destroys the antithesis meant between 'anything' and 'nothing'.

ll. 114–15. *an infinite . . . nothing*: a great deal of nonsense.

l. 119. Frank conversation among good men and true, which comes as a relief to the guarded words with Salanio and Salarino, now gives place to a quiet talk between the two bosom friends, Antonio and Bassanio. The latter is full of embarrassment and natural reluctance at asking for any addition to the many kindnesses for which he is already indebted to his friend. Antonio, on the other hand, is eager to be of further service before even he is aware of its nature.

l. 120. *pilgrimage*: journey; this, the older meaning of the word, is found in the titles of Purchas's two works on travels and travellers.

ll. 122–34. The extravagant Bassanio is a striking contrast to the miserly Shylock. The former frankly admits his habits to be vices, while the latter glories in his as virtues. Shakespeare's love for contrast is also shown in portraying Antonio's generosity with his own money side by side with Bassanio's with money that he has borrowed.

l. 123. *disabled*: impaired; see II. vii. 30 for another use.

l. 124. *something*: (an adverb) somewhat. *swelling port*: ostentatious mode of living.

l. 125. Supply 'to' after 'continuance'.

ll. 126–7. *abridg'd from*: curtailed of. *rate*: style of living.

l. 128. *come . . . from*: pay off honourably, pay up in full.

l. 129. *my time*: my manner of life in the past; Shakespeare often uses 'time' to mean 'life', e. g. 'bank and shoal of time' in *Macbeth*, 'thy long-experienced time' in *Romeo and Juliet*.

l. 130. *gag'd*: pledged.

l. 132. *warranty*: authorization, permission.

l. 135. *it*: the antecedent is 'plots and purposes', and the grammatical looseness thus involved may be avoided

by taking the antecedent to be the two preceding lines, which *in sense* may be taken to stand as 'how *you plot and purpose* to get clear', &c.

l. 136. *still*: always; the common Elizabethan meaning.

ll. 136–7. If your plan is honourable, as you yourself have ever been a man of honour.

l. 137. *Within . . . honour*: within the range of vision of honour; what honour does not refuse to look at.

l. 138. *my person*: personal security in those days was literally a security of the person (and not merely of the property) of the security-giver, which might cost him his life, as it nearly does in this case. *my extremest means*: my last resources; this includes his credit, and so distinguishes this expression from 'purse', which means ready money only.

l. 139. *occasions*: (four syllables) needs, wants.

ll. 141–52. This is the spendthrift's philosophy of borrowing: if you have borrowed one sum and cannot repay it, borrow another; for by so doing you may gain such a fortune that you can pay off both debts. This result is as hazardous as is the upshot of the archery practice that illustrates it. Though in the present case something does very luckily turn up, it is all due to the chance of the drama, which reason may show to be improbable.

l. 141. *of . . . flight*: of the same power of flight; that will fly to the same distance if shot with the same force. 'Flight', in this sense, was a term in archery.

l. 142. *way*: direction. *advised*: careful.

l. 143. The line has an extra foot. *forth*: out; this use of 'forth', where 'out' would now be used, is very common in Shakespeare. This schoolboy way of hazarding both arrows to find both should prepare us for the action of the grown-up man who 'gives and hazards all he hath' in choosing the leaden casket.

l. 144. *childhood proof*: experience during childhood.

l. 145. Because what I am now about to say proceeds entirely from innocent motives; I have no *design* on your purse, but if, as you have offered without my asking, you like to help me with yet another loan, I honestly hope, by putting my plan into execution, to pay off all my debts to you. *innocence*: like that of childhood (l. 144).

l. 146. *wilful*: liking to have his own will in everything, reckless. *youth*: this shows that Bassanio was young; indeed, who could bear the idea of Portia marrying an

elderly or even a middle-aged man? Yet there are some who explain 'time' in l. 129 to mean 'spring-time of life' and so past, in order that they might make Antonio's bosom friend to be of the same age as himself.

l. 147. The construction, to be grammatical, would require this sentence to stand thus: 'and, like a wilful youth, have lost that which I owe.'

l. 148. i. e. if you please to grant me another loan. It is typical of Bassanio that he should avoid plain language in his embarrassment and speak *in metaphor* about this loan. The first loan that is lost (l. 147) is, of course, 'the first arrow'. Supply 'in' before 'that'. *self*: adj. same.

l. 149. *Which*: in which.

l. 150. *or*: either. *find both*: i. e. pay off both the debts I owe you.

l. 151. Or, at all events, pay back the second debt I shall owe you. Bassanio's sanguine temperament makes him forget the third possibility, namely, that he might fail to repay either debt.

l. 154. In beating about the bush in the roundabout language of metaphor, instead of appealing directly in plain language to my affection for you.

l. 156. *my uttermost*: either (1) my utmost 'means' (l. 138) or exertions, i. e. in doubting that I shall do my utmost; or, (2) my utmost 'love' (l. 154), i. e. in thinking that my affection for you is limited.

l. 157. *made waste*: this is ordinary English but it is also a legal expression regarding property.

l. 158. *but say*: tell me plainly; the meaning is more than 'only tell me', for he has already told him, but 'with circumstance', *not* plainly.

l. 159. (Anything) that you think I can do for you.

l. 160. *prest unto it*: ready to do it.

ll. 161–76. In the preceding speech Bassanio confesses that he is a reckless borrower and spendthrift, and yet Antonio's eagerness to lend is much greater than his own eagerness to borrow. In the present speech he confesses that he is somewhat of a fortune-hunter as well as a lover; indeed, as will be seen by and by, it is really Portia that falls in love with him and courts him. There must have been certain rare gifts of nature in this spendthrift and fortune-hunter to win for him such success in both love and friendship.

l. 161. *richly left*: left as a rich heiress on her father's death.

ll. 162–3. She is beautiful of face and person, and—what is more beautiful than beauty of face and person—she is virtuous. *sometimes*: here has the meaning of the Elizabethan 'sometime'—formerly, some time ago.

ll. 163–4. Though Bassanio is a fortune-hunter, he is not wholly so, for this is a love affair of some standing, and a love affair in which the lady made the first advances. This hint that Portia was more in love with Bassanio than he with her, will be confirmed later on.

l. 165. *nothing undervalu'd to*: in no way of less value than.

l. 166. *To*: by the side of, compared to. *Portia*: daughter of the younger Cato and wife of Brutus, one of the assassins of Julius Caesar.

l. 169. We infer that Portia was a blonde with fair hair, and we need not wonder at it, for Titian, and others of the Venetian painters also, gave fair hair to their beauties.

ll. 170–2. Jason, a Greek prince, led the Argonautic expedition to Colchis, on the coast of the Euxine, to obtain the Golden Fleece. This story was the mythical record of the first Greek commercial expedition into the remoter waters of the Black Sea. There is this sly insinuation in the simile, that some at least of the suitors came, like Jason, with *commercial* motives—came more after Portia's gold than for her own sake.

l. 171. *strond*: strand, shores.

l. 174. *with one of them*: with any one of them.

l. 175. Supply 'that' after 'mind'. *thrift*: thriving, success.

ll. 177–85. To Bassanio Antonio confides the truth about his affairs that he had refused to confide to others (l. 43); and to Bassanio he entrusts the power of negotiating for the loan that he himself was to benefit by.

l. 177. Here, then, in this highly precarious condition, lies another likely cause of Antonio's sadness; see note, I. i. 1–7.

l. 178. Scan thus: Néither hàve | 'I món | èy nór | còmmó | dìty; the first foot is a trochee. *commodity*: goods, merchandise, as opposed to 'money'.

l. 179. *raise . . . sum*: raise a sum on the spot: so does 'presently' in l. 183 mean 'at once'.

l. 181. *rack'd*: stretched, strained.

ll. 184–5. The rhymed couplet frequently marks the end of a scene.

l. 185. To have it on my credit on 'Change or through personal regard for me. This personal regard turns out to be terrible irony when Shylock becomes the lender.

Scene II

ll. 1–26. The hazardous condition laid down in her father's will has told upon Portia's sprightly nature and made her miserable in the midst of the happy surroundings that wealth can create; for that condition involves a conflict between obedience to the whim of a *dead* father and the bent of her own affections. It is to create this conflict (in order to test her character) that she is made by the poet to be already in love. The test is severe: for with a *living* father she could have remonstrated whereas, as the will stood, there was no possibility of altering its conditions.

l. 1. *little body*: Portia, therefore, was small in person, very likely; 'little body' in any case is meant to contrast with 'great world', next line.

l. 6. *surfeit*: supply 'themselves'; indulge themselves to excess.

ll. 7, 8. *mean ... mean*: a play on the two words, the second of which means the middle between 'too much' and 'nothing'. *seated*: firmly established. *superfluity*: the man of superfluous means. *comes by*: acquires. *white hairs*: premature decay brought on by 'surfeit' or the possession of too much.

l. 9. *competency*: the man seated in 'the mean' (l. 8) of neither too much nor too little.

l. 10. *sentences*: sentiments, precepts. *well pronounced*: finely delivered.

l. 11. *better*: better 'pronounced', delivered to better effect. *well followed*: faithfully practised by those for whose benefit they were given forth.

l. 13. *to do*: to practise what is enjoined by precept, to 'follow' (l. 11). *to know ... to do*: to know what to enjoin by precept, to 'pronounce well' (l. 10).

ll. 13–14. *chapels ... palaces*: though we all *know by precept* that it is better to build a church or a palace than to build a chapel or a cottage, yet it is not so easy to *do so in practice*.

l. 18. *the blood* : the passions ; for example the passion of love. *hot temper* : passionate temperament.

l. 19. *madness* : the proverb is 'mad as a March hare'.

l. 20. *meshes* : of the net set to catch it ; 'hare' is opposed to 'cripple', as 'hot' is to 'cold' above. It makes us respect Portia's power of self-command when we find that, in her case, this does not happen—that the 'blood' and the 'hare' do *not* leap over the 'decree' and the 'meshes', the latter two being metaphors for the conditions laid down by her father's will. In the present speech we see the struggle between love and duty ; the triumph of the latter comes later on.

l. 21. *reasoning* : talk, kind of talk ; this is one meaning of the word 'reason' in French and is common enough in Shakespeare. *not in the fashion to* : not of the kind suited to.

ll. 22–6. This is the cause of what Nerissa has called the 'miseries' of Portia.

l. 22–3. *whom I would* : whom I like ; 'would' is here a substantive verb.

ll. 23–4. There is again a play on the two words 'will', and a double meaning in the second, (1) wish, (2) testament.

l. 25. *one* : i. e. one whom I would' (l. 23). *nor . . . none* : double negatives in Elizabethan grammar amount, not to an assertion as they do in current English, but to an emphatic negation.

ll. 27–8. This is pious but illusive consolation. *inspirations* : i. e. when making their wills.

l. 30. *who* : he who ; an example of the omission of the antecedent in Elizabethan grammar. *his meaning* : the chest your father meant to be chosen by the successful suitor.

l. 32. *rightly love* : love you and not your money, there is no doubt that some of the suitors had come with the latter in view, as will be seen later. The first quarto reads 'who shall' ; the second reads 'who *you* shall', which givest he same meaning, 'who' being the nominative and 'you' the objective ; an emendation on this reads '*whom* you shall'. This reading also naturally enough leads to the question that follows, but makes 'rightly' lose all the force that the readings of the quartos give to it. *what warmth, &c.* : which of them do *you* love ? This is her downright meaning in asking the

question which naturally follows on what precedes, but it is put in circumspect language.

l. 35. *thee . . . thou*: this form of the second person, in Elizabethan English, was used (1) by superiors to inferiors, (2) to show contempt, (3) to show affection; 'ye' and 'you' were used (1) by inferiors to superiors, (2) to show respect, (3) in the formal language of compliment. *over-name them*: name them over one by one. Portia's suitors are of many nationalities.

l. 37. *level at*: aim at, guess at.

l. 38. *Neapolitan*: of Naples. Neapolitans, in those days, were celebrated for their horsemanship.

ll. 39–120. In reply to this circumspect question as to her affections, Portia gives a free and easy description of the suitors, full of harmless satire, displaying a keen sense of the comic and humorous side of other people's characters, and forming a contrast to the keenness of intellect and strength of moral purpose that bring out the beauty of her own. Notice how much she has to say about the suitors for whom she feels no affection, and how reticent she becomes when the name of the one for whom she cares is mentioned.

l. 39. *colt*: has a double meaning, (1) a wild youth, (2) a lover of horseflesh, as the next sentence shows.

l. 41. *appropriation*: acquisition, addition.

l. 44. *County Palatine*: i. e. a North German. *county*: count; in English, as still in some of the Romanic languages, the word for the person used to be a disyllable, which it now is only for the territory. The count palatine or palsgrave of the Rhine province is here meant; some, however, see a topical reference here to a Polish palatine who had visited England, but this event took place more than twelve years before this play was acted.

l. 45. *as who*: see note on I. i. 93.

l. 46. *An . . . choose*: if you will not marry me, please yourself, do as you like; this meaning occurs in *The Taming of the Shrew*, 'I hope I may choose.'

l. 47. *prove*: turn out to be. *the*: like the. *weeping philosopher*: Heraclitus of Ephesus, who lived in the sixth century B. C. and ever bemoaned the folly and wickedness of mankind.

l. 48. *unmannerly*: unbecoming; sadness certainly does not well become a young man, and habitual sadness in youth may lead to a continual state of tearfulness in old age.

l. 50. The bone is the *food* appropriate for death.

l. 52. *by*: about; the various meanings of 'by', apparently widely different, are traceable to the original one of 'near'.

ll. 54–5. i.e. he has no *other* claim to be called a man.

l. 56. *he hath*: he boasts that he has.

l. 57. *a better bad habit*: he is a better hand at this bad habit; he has a way of frowning, which in itself is a bad habit, in which he surpasses the count.

l. 58. *every man in no man*: an ape, not a man; imitative in everything, original in nothing; a man without an individuality. *throstle*: this bird, of course, is a sweet singer, but the meaning here is that he cannot resist the temptation to dance to a bird's music, much less can he resist dancing to a human musician's playing.

l. 59. *fence . . . shadow*: he will fence with anything, even his own shadow.

l. 60. *marry twenty husbands*: if I should marry him I should be marrying not one but twenty husbands, since he is every kind of man by turns.

l. 62. *forgive him*: she, perhaps, means rather that she would *thank* him.

l. 63. *requite*: love him in return; double meaning, (1) she could not love him, in all seriousness, (2) she could not possibly love twenty husbands.

l. 64. *What . . . to*: what is your opinion about. *Falconbridge*: that there is a Falconbridge in the historical play of *King John*, whose action, of course, takes place in the thirteenth century, is a very slender ground for saying that the action of *The Merchant of Venice* also takes place at about the same time. All that can be said prima facie is that this action took place some time during Venetian commercial supremacy, which gives a range of many centuries down to the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope. A narrowing down of this range is attempted in the Introduction, and below in note to l. 78.

l. 66. *I say nothing*: double meaning, (1) I have no opinion of him, good or bad, (2) I cannot converse with him.

l. 67. This is a hit at the ignorance of the English in foreign languages in those days, and a proof of Portia's knowledge of them.

l. 68. *you*: for you are well aware of it. *will come*: will be ready to come and bear witness.

l. 69. *a poor pennyworth*: a very slight knowledge. *the English*: though everywhere else Portia speaks very good English, here, by way of proving the truth of her assertion, she speaks broken English. The definite article in this usage is correct in French and Italian, which we may presume she speaks very well, but is incorrect in English.

l. 70. *a proper man's picture*: a faultlessly handsome man to look at; the very image or model of a handsome man.

l. 72. *suited*: dressed. *doublet*: what would now be called a coat or jacket—an 'inner garment', the outer one being the cloak or overcoat.

l. 73. *round hose*: breeches, very puffy about the thighs. *bonnet*: hat or cap; still used in Scotland for *men's* head-gear.

l. 74. *his behaviour everywhere*: i.e. he had picked up his manners in all sorts of places, like his clothes.

l. 75. *Scottish lord*: this was the reading until James I came to the throne, when it was altered to 'other lord' in order not to give offence to the king's Scottish susceptibilities.

l. 77. *hath a neighbourly charity*: loves his neighbour as himself; does not return blow for blow (see l. 81, 'another').

l. 78. *of . . . of*: on . . . from. This reference to the defeat of the Scot by the Englishman points to the reign of Edward I as the upper limit of the action of this play.

l. 79. *again*: back. *when he was able*: he never was.

ll. 80–1. *sealed under*: i.e. put his name below; the principal signed his name, and the surety then signed his beneath that of the principal. The meaning of the passage is that the Scotsman received one blow, and swore to repay it, the Frenchman promising his assistance the next time. The allusion is to the constant alliances between Scotland and France, and France's many promises to assist her friend, while the 'canny' Scottish character is shown by the Scotsman's care in not retaliating till he has obtained help.

l. 83. *Very*: to distinguish this word from 'most' in l. 84 the latter must be taken as a *stronger* superlative than the former.

ll. 86–7. *best . . . beast*: the latter word is to be pronounced as in 'Irish' English—'*baste*', in order to make the rhyme between the two more perfect; this so-called

Irish pronunciation is merely the older English one, which followed the old French pronunciation, still retained in French.

l. 88. *fall* . . . *fell*: befall . . . befell. *make shift*: contrive, manage.

l. 94. *contrary*: wrong, in which the portrait is *not*. This is a cursory indication that Portia knows in which casket the portrait is; there are proofs further on to confirm the hint here given. *Rhenish wine*: the national beverage, or *one* of them (for lager beer, even in those days, was another), would no doubt prove an irresistible temptation to the hard-drinking German.

ll. 98–103. The news of the imminent departure of these unwelcome suitors has been withheld by maid from mistress until she has got her to describe them, and to express her dislike for them. The descriptions are meant to stand as those of national traits of character, though they apply, not to the 'masses', but to the 'classes', and certainly are not wholly true even of these. We have thus the horse-loving South Italian, the stolid North German, the mercurial Frenchman, the handsome dumb-show of an Englishman, the drunken sot of a South German, and the careful Scotsman.

l. 102. *by . . . sort*: in some other way; with a play on the Latin meaning of 'sort', namely, chance, lottery.

l. 103. *imposition*: charge, condition laid down.

l. 104. *Sibylla*: the sibyl of Cumae who offered the sibylline books of prophecies to Tarquin, king of Rome; her life was to be as long in years as the number of the grains of sand she held in her hand. 'Sibyl' as a common noun means a prophetess, and there are many sibyls in Roman history or mythology.

l. 105. *Diana*: the goddess of the moon and the type of virgin chastity. *unless*, &c.: in spite of the misery it causes her, she here declares her resolution to follow her sense of duty. The departure of these six suitors does not remove her fears lest love and duty should not harmonize, for new arrivals are reported.

l. 107. *dote*: we should naturally have expected 'dote on his *presence*', but very unexpectedly 'absence' is the word used. This figure of speech is very common in Aristophanes.

ll. 114–20. As soon as Bassanio's name is mentioned Portia's stream of playful satire dries up; she becomes

somewhat abrupt, being unwilling to allow her affection for him to outrun her self-control.

l. 117. *my foolish eyes* : formal modesty; my eyes may be mistaken, yours are the only wise judges in the case.

ll. 119–20. At the reference to the man of her choice, she first, with girlish impulsiveness, came out with his name (l. 114) and then drew back bashfully with 'I think'; now in these two lines she speaks with perfect seriousness and candour.

l. 122. *four strangers* : there are six described above, and this discrepancy has given rise to a gratuitous 'theory' that there were four described in an 'earlier' version, and two—the Englishman and Scotsman—added in the 'later' version of the play. The discrepancy is simply due to Shakespeare's carelessness in unessentials.

ll. 126–32. Portia utters the whole of this speech flippantly; she has already used doggerel in 'shrive' and 'wive', and very likely means to use it here too; if so, it is easily found in the somewhat forced rhyme of the words 'before', 'wooer', and 'door' (a disyllable).

l. 128. *condition* : disposition, temper.

l. 130. *shrive* : hear my confession and give me absolution. Portia is, of course, a Roman Catholic.

l. 131. *Sirrah* : addressed to the serving man. *go before* : precede me to the audience chamber to announce my coming.

Scene III

In the most conciliatory tones and language, Bassanio broaches the subject of the loan. Shylock sees difficulties about granting it, but yet thinks he may, with Antonio as security. He wishes to see Antonio, who opportunely enters. Shylock keeps him waiting some little time without noticing his presence, while, in an aside, he lays open to the reader his hatred, and his resolve to gratify it at the opportunity now offered. One cause of this hatred is that the one is a Jew and the other a Christian. Another cause is that the one lends money at usurious rates, the other brings down the rate by lending gratis. A discussion on this subject only confirms each in his opinion of the righteousness of his own practice, and the iniquity of that of the other. A third cause of this hatred crops up in the vehement outburst of the Jew against the personal indignities he had

received at the hands of the Christian, and in the angry retort of the Christian that he means to repeat them. The one asks, 'Shall I lend to you as to a friend after such treatment from you?' The other replies. 'Lend to me as to an enemy.' The breach is now about as wide as it can be, when the Jew cleverly fills it up with a seemingly friendly offer to advance the loan without interest, as if converted to the Christian's view on the question of usury. Only a little condition is to be added to the bond by way of a merry jest. The Christian says he is ready to play his part in the jest; his friend suspects and fears, the Jew protests, and the Christian departs, ready to fall blindly into the trap.

l. 1. This, of course, is the continuation of a conversation already begun. *ducats*: literally, coins minted by *dukes*; here Venetian ducats are meant, coined by the *doges* of Venice, and worth between four and five shillings, the value in exchange being variable. In the Middle Ages potentates other than kings exercised the sovereign right of coinage. *well*: uttered in the decisive tones of a man of business.

l. 2. *sir*: Bassanio is conciliatory, apologetic, and afraid to give offence.

l. 4. *the which*: this use of the definite article before the relative pronoun is still the common idiom in the Romanic languages: *lequel, il quale*, &c.

l. 5. *shall be bound*: will sign a bond.

l. 7. *May . . . me*: can you help me? From this it is clear the loan is to be made to Bassanio, and Antonio is to sign the bond as standing security. *pleasure*: oblige.

l. 12. Spoken doubtfully and half to himself by Shylock. *a good man*: a solvent man, a man of substance, able to pay his way; in commercial language, bills are similarly said to be good or bad.

l. 13. Bassanio is not likely to have misunderstood Shylock's meaning in using the word 'good', but the latter pretends that he has.

l. 15. The reader will note the effusiveness of Shylock's disclaimer, and how the *four* 'no's', instead of the more usual three, contribute to it. It was his own suspicious tone in uttering l. 12 that naturally led to Bassanio's question.

ll. 17, 18. *sufficient*: solvent, having means enough. *are*

in supposition: are hypothetical, existing in the imagination and not realized, being yet out at sea and exposed to risk. *he hath*, &c.: as a man of business Shylock keeps himself well posted with news of Antonio's affairs.

ll. 19, 20. *upon the Rialto*: on 'Change, at the Exchange, at the Bourse, i.e. the meeting-place of merchants and brokers for the sale of 'bills of exchange' on foreign countries, and for the transaction of other commercial business. *Rialto*: (1) originally this was the island-settlement out of which arose Venice—the *riva alta* or high shore, afterwards shortened into a masculine word; (2) next (as here) it meant the Exchange that sprang up here; (3) the bridge over the Grand Canal near this place: this bridge is what the modern tourist understands by that word, and the word 'upon' is likely to mislead some readers into understanding it in the same sense here. *Mexico*: an anachronism, as is 'Indies' in l. 19, whether East or West. Venetian ships could go no farther than the Levant, and Mexico was unknown to Europe till after the discovery of America by Columbus. As is usual with him, Shakespeare is thinking of European commerce during his own days. 'Indies' must here mean the East Indies, since 'Mexico' gives enough reference to commerce with the Far West. The trade with India was overland (e. g. via Palmyra) till it reached the Levant.

l. 21. *squandered*: scattered; 'squandering glances', in *As You Like It*, means random glances. Shakespeare never used this word in its modern sense.

l. 23. (1) The reading of the quartos and folios reverses the order of the words 'land-thieves and water-thieves'; the explanation is that the author intended here a piece of fun to relieve the hideousness of Shylock's character. The Jew, being himself a land-thief, wishes he had not uttered the word, and hastily tries to cover it up by reverting to 'water-thieves' and explaining what he meant by *that* term. (2) The reading in the text was suggested by Collier; it serves the purpose of bringing a word immediately before its explanation. Reading (1) gives a rhetorical inversion which occurs again in III. i. 61, 62; reading (2) preserves the order suggested by the words 'land-rats and water-rats.'

l. 29. *I will bethink me*: I shall take time and think

over the matter; 'me' is reflexive. The announcement comes rather as a shock to the sanguine Bassanio. Indeed, Shylock seems to take some pleasure in playing with the anxiety of both his clients.

l. 31. Of course Bassanio could not make a less obliging offer than this.

ll. 32–6. Shylock the bigoted Jew gets the better here of Shylock the man of business.

l. 33. *your prophet*: in giving Christ this title. Shylock pointedly refuses to recognize the *divinity* Christians ascribe to Him. *Nazarite*: here used for 'Nazarene', a native of Nazareth, as it is similarly used in English translations of the Bible earlier than the Authorized Version, which appeared *after* this play. In that version a distinction is made between the two words, and 'Nazarite' is confined to meaning one who, like Samson or John the Baptist, had been dedicated by peculiar rites to the service of God. *conjured . . . into*: this is the miracle of the 'Gadarene swine', by which Christ compelled the devil to quit a human being whom he had demoniacally 'possessed', and to enter into the bodies of a herd of swine.

l. 35. *and so following*: and so forth, et caetera.

l. 37. *what news*: with these words he turns back to business. *he*: supply 'who'. Shylock pretends *not* to recognize Antonio; therefore Bassanio introduces him by name in the next line.

l. 39. *fawning publican*: cringing tax-gatherer. The cringing look on Antonio's face is due to anxiety on his friend's behalf: the moment he sees him and the Jew together, he guesses that the one has asked the other for the loan, and this look of entreaty on his face is meant to conciliate the Jew. How and why this look gradually changes till it reaches the climax of violent 'storming' (l. 135) will be seen below. 'Publican' is here used, as it is in the Bible, for Roman farmers of the revenues, or their underlings—the tax-collectors; the entire body (because they collected the revenues for a foreign ruler—the Roman emperor) was odious to the Jews, who in the New Testament speak with Pharisaic contempt of 'publicans and sinners'. The word 'fawning' has tempted some critics to fancy that Shakespeare, in using this word, misunderstood the word in the New Testament to mean the keeper of a public-house; but this is possible only if

it can be shown that in his days the word ever had this meaning.

ll. 39–50. These lines set forth the causes of Shylock's hatred to Antonio: namely, because he is a Christian and hates Jews, because he lends money gratis and hates usurers, and because he has been in the habit of publicly insulting him. Antonio, royal merchant and thorough gentleman as he was, certainly did treat Shylock in this manner. In those days, however, religious toleration and taking interest for money were looked upon as sinful, and this sort of treatment of Jews was accordingly upheld as a Christian duty and a Christian virtue.

l. 40. *for*: because; hence 'therefor(e)' means 'because of that'.

l. 41. *low simplicity*: contemptible foolishness.

l. 43. *usance*: interest, payment for the 'use' of borrowed money.

l. 44. *catch . . . hip*: only get him at a disadvantage, get him once into my power; the expression is taken from the language of wrestling.

l. 45. I shall amply gratify the long-standing hatred I have borne him. His hatred has been starving for want of gratification, and he hungers for revenge.

l. 48. *well-won thrift*: honestly-won gains.

l. 49. *interest*: the taking of interest on money lent was abhorrent to Christian Europe in those days; for the reason see note on l. 132.

l. 50. Bassanio is evidently indignant at Shylock's taking no notice of Antonio, and asks him curtly whether he has heard him announcing or introducing Antonio to him (l. 38).

l. 51. I am mentally taking stock of the cash I have in hand. *of*: regarding, about.

l. 52. And as closely as I can guess from memory, since my account-books are not at hand.

l. 53. *raise up the gross*: make up the total (raising a loan is not here meant).

l. 55. *tribe*: the Hebrew *race* was subdivided into twelve tribes, so that the word must here mean the one of these twelve to which Shylock belonged, and not the whole race, as it does in l. 49.

l. 56. *soft*: wait a minute. Shylock only pretends to forget; his object is to keep them on the rack of suspense.

l. 57. After keeping him waiting all this time, Shylock

pretends to be suddenly aware of Antonio's presence, and greets him most effusively. *Rest you fair*: may God keep you in peace ('rest') and prosperity ('fair'); 'rest' is in the third person, optative mood.

l. 58. *last . . . mouths*: last person we were speaking of.

ll. 59–63. Antonio's 'fawning' look has given place to one of rising indignation, which, however, he here controls.

l. 60. *giving*: paying as borrower. *excess*: interest over and above the bare principal.

l. 61. *ripe wants*: needs that can wait no longer for satisfaction, urgent needs.

l. 62. *possess'd*: informed; put in possession of the fact.

l. 63. *would*: wish for; a substantive verb. This is the reading of the second quarto; the first quarto reads 'are you resolv'd, how much he would have?' i.e. are you informed how much he wishes to have? 'He would' is to be a monosyllable in scanning, 'he'd'. In the reading of the text there is a cold, quiet contempt conveyed by speaking of Shylock in the third person in his presence; this is lost in the other reading. Shylock's answering a question that is not addressed to him makes him, as it were, swallow the slight.

l. 65. *I had forgot*: we feel sure that Shylock is not the man to forget a single word on money matters after it had once been told him. *you told me so*: addressed to Bassanio. The change in the person addressed, from Shylock to Bassanio in l. 62, and from Antonio to Bassanio in this line, according to the reading of the second quarto, has been made a feeble ground for preferring the reading of the first quarto, and for ascribing the words 'and for three months' to Bassanio, as obviating this change. The change of person imparts a free all-round character to this 'three-cornered' talk, while the first quarto reading makes it a stiff and formal dialogue between two at a time. To the objection 'how does Antonio know that it was to be for three months?' the answer is that Bassanio had had a previous talk with him about the amount and the time.

l. 66. Another brisk change from Bassanio to Antonio as the person addressed, and another racking suspense interposed by Shylock. There is a jarring harshness in Shylock's 'you's'.

l. 68. *advantage*: interest. *I do never use it*: I never practise it.

l. 69. Here follows the orthodox doctrine of usury laid down by Shylock: Our third patriarch, the holy Jacob, by a smart stroke of business (which simpletons may call theft or cheating) managed to get more than was ever intended for him, out of his father-in-law; and he throve in the world and 'was blest' by heaven in consequence. Now, usury is also a smart bit of business (though some may sneeringly call it 'smart practice'); therefore have I, a usurer, thriven in the world and expect heaven to bless me for my righteousness; for usury is not theft, but a righteous practice, hallowed by the example of our patriarch. The reference is to Genesis xxx.

l. 71. *wise mother*: Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, by an act that Christian morality would call deception, contrived to make her son supplant his elder brother, Esau, in his birthright: see Genesis xxvii.

l. 72. *third possessor*: third holder of the patriarchate, Abraham being the first and Isaac the second. *he*: emphatic—he and not Esau, who would have been the third but for Rebecca's 'wisdom'.

ll. 74–5. Shylock's language and tone show that he is aware of the weakness of his argument. *directly*: in money: but he took interest indirectly when he managed to get a larger number of the lambs than would have been his had he left things alone and let nature take her course.

l. 76. *were compromis'd*: had covenanted, had together made promises to each other.

l. 77. *eanlings*: yeanlings, newly dropped lambs.

l. 87. Making gain or profit, if not dishonestly made, is approved of and rewarded by God; the analogy with Jacob's action shows that usury is not theft, *ergo* usury is sanctioned and rewarded by God. This is Shylock's clinching syllogism. It need hardly be said that there is no truth in either analogy or syllogism.

l. 89. *venture*: matter of chance. Jacob covenanted to serve his future father-in-law on a condition that depended upon chance.

l. 91. Antonio here piously explains chance as something brought about by the providence of God alone, and as beyond human control: whereas the practice of usury is entirely a human contrivance, depending on the free-will of the usurer.

ll. 95–100. Antonio's disgust at this defence of usury gets the better of his prudence, and his temper rises, as it were,

to 'blood heat' till he speaks his mind about Shylock, in his hearing, to a third person; in l. 128 his anger fairly boils over, and he roundly abuses him to his face.

l. 99. *goodly*: fine to look at.

l. 100. *falsehood*: deceit, dishonesty (not merely a lie or untruth, here).

ll. 101–2. While Antonio is speaking of him and *at* him, Shylock falls into another fit of abstraction, in which he talks aloud to himself, while, no doubt, keeping his ears wide open. What he says to himself is this: 'the amount asked for is large, the interest is to run for only three months out of the twelve, and the rate——' he was going to say 'has yet to be settled', when he is impatiently interrupted by the now wrathful Antonio.

l. 103. *beholding*: beholden, obliged (to you for the loan).

ll. 96–127. It is impossible to say at what exact time during the action of the play Shylock first thought of the pound of flesh as the means for taking his revenge; but the fierceness of this speech, concentrated, as it is, upon that one of the several causes of his hatred which he must have most keenly felt—namely, the personal insults heaped on him by the Christian—makes it likely that it was just before beginning this speech that he had hit upon this mode of a personal retribution that would touch his life, not merely his property. Ever since he uttered the words 'if I can catch him' of l. 44, he has been inwardly revolving in his mind *how* to get this hold on him, while outwardly he has been taken up either with the business question of the amount, the time, and the rate of the loan, or with the academic question of the theory of usury. This speech marks another stage in another connexion too: up to now Shylock has been holding evenly the balance of suspense in the minds of the two applicants, between '*I may*,' and '*I may not lend to you*': now he gives the scales a most alarming tilt with '*how can* YOU, *who have treated me so, expect that* I *should lend to you?*' Having thus given the rack the last turn it will bear, he eases it off altogether with an offer to lend gratis.

l. 104. *many . . . oft*: (intensive repetition) many and many a time.

l. 107. *Still*: always, invariably. *patient shrug*: a shrug of the shoulders expressive of patience or helplessness.

l. 108. *sufferance, &c.*: silent endurance is worn *inwardly*

on our hearts as the badge of our race. The Venetian law compelled Jews to wear yellow caps as an *outward* and humiliating mark of their nationality.

ll. 109–10. *call*: this has been amended to 'call'd', and *spet* (Qq.) or *spit* (Ff.) has been taken as a past tense, in order to be in keeping with the past tense of 'rated' in l. 105; these past tenses well indicate Antonio's *past* behaviour contrasted with his suppliant position *now* (l. 112). But if 'call' is retained, it may, with 'spit', be well taken as the 'generic' present, indicating a general fact: 'you have been in the habit of calling me names and spitting on me'. *cut-throat*: exacting murderous rates of interest. *gaberdine*: a long cloak or overcoat. This was *not* a distinctive dress, but was worn alike by Jew and Christian: 'Jewish,' therefore, must mean 'because I was a Jew' (you spat on my gaberdine).

l. 111. *use*: double meaning: (1) using, (2) taking interest or 'usance' on.

l. 113. *Go to, then*: an Elizabethan idiom equivalent to the current 'come now'.

l. 114. *moneys*: this is meant to be pronounced with a Jewish accent as '*moe-nish*' or '*mone-ish*'.

ll. 115–6. This conduct, that would now be condemned as vulgar and disgraceful in any one, would, in the Middle Ages, where religious animosities were concerned, be considered to be eminently befitting a 'gentleman and a Christian'. *foot*: kick; in Elizabethan English nouns were used as verbs without change oftener than now. *stranger*: (adj.) strange.

l. 121. *bondman's key*: servile tone.

l. 123. The rest of the line is taken up *with action* on the part of the speaker; the action here consists of Shylock's putting himself into a 'bondman's' attitude.

l. 128. In this outburst Antonio uses the second person singular, which would imply contempt. Coke addressed Raleigh in the singular person at the latter's trial, with the same effect.

l. 131. *friendship*: i. e. a friend.

l. 132. *A breed*: interest, increase; literally, offspring, Gr. *tokos*, which means both 'child' and 'interest'. *for*: in return for, the quarto reading; that of the folios is '*of*', meaning 'from'. This reading gives a telling antithesis between 'breed' and 'barren', but is open to objection, inasmuch as it clashes with the '*of*', also

meaning 'from', before 'friend'. *barren metal*: Aristotle was the first economist who held that the worlds of animal and vegetable life were prolific—could produce four (or any other higher number) out of two, but that the mineral world or 'kingdom' was 'barren', so that in it two always remained two; therefore, he argued, it was 'unnatural' to make gold and silver money 'breed' or become prolific, by taking interest. Aristotle's view was adopted by the Christian Church in the Middle Ages, and all good Christians were forbidden to take interest on money lent. The result was that most of the money-lending fell into the hands of Jews in Christian countries, and consequently the old hatred of Christians for Jews, due to religious grounds, was intensified by a new hatred, due to this economic ground. Of course some Christian money-lenders disregarded the injunction of the Church, and in the sixteenth century in England legislation either prohibited usury altogether or fixed a maximum limit for the rate, from time to time, with a pious declaration that usury, though thus tolerated, was 'sinful and detestable'. This latter was the law in force when Shakespeare wrote this play.

ll. 133–5. With these rash words Antonio, with his own hands, as it were, fits in the keystone to the arch of Shylock's diabolical plan; we have only to substitute the words 'a pound of flesh' for the word 'penalty' and we have what is now in Shylock's own mind and finds expression, immediately after, from his own lips.

l. 134. *Who*: this Elizabethan use of a relative without any verb or governing preposition serves to connect the pronoun following (here 'he') with its antecedent (here 'enemy'); such a construction is now ungrammatical and survives only as a vulgarism in the superfluous use of 'which' (e.g. by Mrs. Gamp); we should nowadays say '*from whom*, if he', &c. *break*: fail to keep his word, fail to pay on the appointed day, see l. 161, 'break his day'; this need not imply bankruptcy as the cause of the failure, but in III. i. 112, 'break' means 'become bankrupt'. *with better face*: without a feeling of shame, with a clear conscience.

ll. 135–49. These two speeches of Shylock's, taken together, show that Antonio, without knowing to the full extent what he is doing, has given the game away, and that Shylock knows that it is now completely in

his own hands. Hence his sudden change to the most friendly affability, while he plays his two trump cards: one, the offer of a loan without interest; the other, the 'merry jest' which, taking Antonio at his word, he proposes as a 'penalty'. It is a mistake to suppose that the first of these speeches shows a softening—a feeling that he has gone too far—in Shylock, for the second speech belies this supposition.

l. 137. *shames*: acts of shame.

l. 138. *doit*: a Dutch coin worth half a farthing. Shylock here craftily pretends to have become a convert to Antonio's views on usury.

l. 140. Supply 'which' after 'kind'. The joyful exclamation at this offer shows that Shylock had well calculated the last turn of the screw that he should put on before easing off, in order to draw forth the maximum of gratitude for this apparent kindness. An earlier and more ready compliance would not have drawn forth so much. and indeed, when found to be accompanied by the 'merry' penalty, might have roused suspicions strong enough to lead to a refusal of his offer. Even as it is, some suspicion is roused on the part of Bassanio; but Antonio is blindly confident and readily complies. *This were kindness*: the third quarto assigns this speech to Antonio, the first and second and the folios assign it to Bassanio, and with better reason, for it serves to illustrate that constant play upon emotion met with in Shakespeare, when Bassanio joyfully accepts the offer of a gratis loan made here, but draws back when he hears, in Shylock's next speech, the condition attached to it.

l. 142. *Go*: come; these two verbs are the very same by derivation, both coming from the root GAM in Aryan; and the difference of meaning between them found in current English did not exist in Elizabethan English. *seal me*: let me ask you to seal; the 'me' is an 'ethical' dative, which in the present case serves to give a lively turn to the talk by keeping speaker and person spoken to in touch with each other.

l. 143. *single bond*: bond signed by your single self, without any signatures of sureties added.

l. 146. *condition*: agreement. Shylock's language and phraseology are here strictly and laboriously legal, and while seemingly they are only a playful parody of legal accuracy, in secret reality they have a grim earnestness

showing that the speaker means to carry out the agreement to the letter.

l. 147. *nominated for* : stated expressly (Lat. *nominatim*) as being for. *equal* : either (1) as equivalent of the amount due, or (2) exact, neither more nor less. The second meaning is better, for, by what is called Sophoclean irony, Shylock here unconsciously lays the trap into which he himself is destined to fall, since the judgement at the trial turns mainly on this *exact* pound of flesh.

l. 148. *fair* : the word is added only to gloss over the hideous proposal, and to indicate the speaker's habitual hypocrisy ; to him the flesh of a pork-eating Christian was, like his food, 'unclean' ; 'fair' certainly does not mean that Shylock, being an Oriental, looked upon his own flesh as 'dark'.

l. 149. *pleaseth* : supply 'it' before.

l. 150. *Content* : agreed ; in Elizabethan English this word, besides its current meaning, had the meaning of 'pleased', 'happy' ; here it amounts to 'I am happy to agree'.

l. 151. *in the Jew* : in one from whom you would expect no kindness. As there were two marked stages in the rise of Antonio's indignation, so there are two in its cooling down ; one here, where he admits to Bassanio that 'the Jew' has kindness in him after all ; the other in l. 169, where he cordially addresses him by name as 'Shylock'.

ll. 152–3. It is to Bassanio's credit that his regard for his friend's safety is stronger than the urgency of his own needs. *dwell* : continue.

ll. 158–68. This tone of injured innocence, craftily put on by Shylock, is meant to confirm Antonio in his growing confidence in him, and succeeds in doing so ; but it fails to disarm Bassanio of his distrust.

l. 159. *teaches* : another reading of the nominative is 'dealings'—a singular in sense, equivalent to 'habit of dealing'. It is ascribing too much learning to Shakespeare to say that with this other reading he is using 'teaches' as a plural in -s of the M.E. northern dialect.

l. 161. *break his day* : fail to pay up on the appointed day. *what should I gain* : there is fierce, but secret exultation in his breast when he says this ; he will gain what he dearly loves—revenge.

l. 164. Scan thus : Ìs nót | só éstim | àble pró | fìtàble | neíthèr. The second foot is a spondee, the 'so' being

certainly strongly emphasized, the fourth is a pyrrhic and the fifth a trochee, and the two terminations *-able* are slurred over. The scansion usually given misses the emphasis on 'so', and makes one termination to be accented and the other to be unaccented, without any reason for the distinction; though it is true that '-able' often in Elizabethan English has the 'a' long, as it is in Latin.

l. 166. *extend*: offer; used in its literal Latin sense of 'hold forth'.

l. 167. *so*: well and good.

l. 168. *for my love*: for the sake of my love for you (of which I have given a proof in this offer that I make). *wrong me*: misjudge me in your thoughts, suspect me.

ll. 173–4. After seeing a good deal of Shylock as a man of business in this lengthy scene, we here get the first glimpse into his private, domestic life. It is a loveless, sordid, suspicious, and joyless life; he has a daughter, but he does not leave his house in her charge, but in that of his servant-boy, who, therefore, is a watch, not only over the house, but over the daughter; he trusts his daughter less than he trusts his servant, and he trusts his servant very little. *fearful guard*: watch kept by one whose fidelity I fear about, whom I distrust. *unthrifty knave*: a good-for-nothing; in Shylock's eyes the worst of all vices is want of his own greatest virtue—thrift; 'knave' in the Teutonic languages originally meant 'boy'.

l. 175. Here anger disappears altogether and gives way to a jocular mood. The scene, representing on the face of it nothing more than a business transaction, has displayed a succession of changing emotions, and a vivid portrayal of the practice of the guileful upon open natures.

l. 176. Antonio is little aware that his joke will turn out to be a prophecy.

l. 177. *fair terms*: friendly words. *and*: when joined to, when coming from.

l. 178. *dismay*; cause for dismay.

ACT II

Scene I

The Prince of Morocco boasts, in hyperbolical language, of his exploits in the fields both of Mars and of Venus, in neither of which has he met with his match. His face is black, but it has commanded the love of the fairest (in the plural) of Moorish women, and daunted the courage of the bravest anywhere—in Morocco, in Persia, in Turkey. He wants to add the name of Portia to the list of his numerous conquests in love, and, in order to do so, he will challenge the suitor with the fairest face, and prove to him and to all that his own blood is redder and warmer. He will—if human antagonists are no longer forthcoming—encounter the fiercest of wild beasts and—he is quite sure—overcome them, to prove his love and his valour to be superior to those of any mortal. But the winning of her hand depends upon blind chance which may force it upon the unworthiest. Such are the vaunting sentiments of Morocco. Portia's reply is full of a self-restraint that completely masks her disgust. She would not choose a husband by externals alone; her father's will does not allow her to choose at all; if chance favours him, she will have him: but if it does not, he must swear never to woo any woman again.

l. 1. *complexion*: four syllables in scanning.

l. 2. *shadow'd livery*: either (1) darkened appearance, as if his face was the sun, but the sun in eclipse; or (2) dark covering or clothing (i. e. in this case the skin) caused by the sun: (1) is the better, because the most bombastic way of taking it. *burnish'd*: bright, as opposed to 'shadow'd'. The word, however, is so closely associated with brightness caused artificially that the reading 'burning' has been proposed instead; this reading well explains how the 'livery' came to be made.

l. 3. The sun being hottest in the torrid zone is presumed to be nearest to it. From this line it is clear that the 'livery' of l. 2 is not meant to give him a rank inferior to the sun's. This rank is only surpassed by that of the emperors of old China, who styled themselves 'the elder brother of the sun and moon'.

l. 4. *fairest*: in complexion, as opposed to his own dark one. *creature*: here masculine; a rival suitor is meant.

l. 6. *make incision*: young gallants used, among other extravagances, to gash themselves and draw blood in the name of their mistresses, and drink some of it in wine to their healths.

l. 7. *reddest*: 'red' blood was a sign of courage, 'white' blood, of cowardice: see note on III. ii. 86, 'livers white as milk.'

l. 8. *aspect*: face; accented on the second syllable.

l. 9. *fear'd*: (causative) frightened, caused (the valiant) to fear. *by my love*: sc. for you.

l. 10. *best-regarded*: either (1) regarded as being the best, or (2) having the best looks. *virgins*: this boastful mention of the beauty and the number of the ladies he had 'conquered', no doubt deeply shocks Portia, but she controls her disgust. *clime*: country; literally, the inclination ('cline') of latitudes to the equator or the poles, and hence the regions situated at different latitudes.

l. 11. *change*: disguise, as thieves do their faces; the next line shows that this is the metaphor.

l. 12. *steal your thoughts*: so that you will think of me alone.

l. 13. *In . . . choice*: in the matter of choosing; periphrastic for 'in choosing' or 'in my choice'.

l. 14. *nice*: (1) foolish, (2) fastidious. *direction . . . eyes*: i.e. face, figure, complexion, are not the sole considerations that sway my inclination.

l. 17. *scanted me*: left me but narrow room for choice.

l. 18. *wit*: wisdom, judgement; as opposed to her own 'niceness', l. 14; another, but a tame, reading is 'will'.

l. 19. *His wife who*: wife to him who. *means I told you*: means that I told you of. Both these are cases of abbreviated constructions. Note the use of the singular 'that' before the plural 'means'.

ll. 20–2. *stood as fair . . . for*: would have stood as fair a chance of winning. To the prince Portia means this to stand as a colourless statement; to herself she means that he had no chance, for she has in I. ii. expressed her hearty dislike of all the suitors she had looked on, and in using 'fair' without any qualified noun she has a sly hit at his darkness. Another construction is to take 'for' with 'comer', *comer for* meaning suitor for, candidate for. *Even for that*: the 'even' shows that he expected her to say 'you had stood *more* fair than any comer', &c.

l. 25. *the Sophy*: a generic title of the Shahs of Persia belonging to the Suffavi dynasty founded early in the sixteenth century. The similarity of sound with the Greek *sophos*, wise, led critics, ignorant of Arabic and Persian, to give the word the same meaning: it is really derived from an Arabic word meaning pure, chosen.

l. 26. *That*: if a comma and dash after 'prince' be read, this word is co-ordinate with 'that', l. 25. both having 'scimitar' for antecedent. *fields*: battles. *of*: from. *Sultan Solyman*: Solyman the Magnificent of Turkey. Because this Sultan led an unsuccessful expedition against Persia, this line has been punctuated as in the text, and interpreted thus: the Persian prince defeated Solyman thrice; Morocco slew the Persian prince; *ergo* Morocco was a greater warrior than Solyman. The reader will choose which interpretation he pleases, but he need not search history to help him in choosing, for history records nothing of this Moroccan.

l. 32. Lichas was the page who brought the poisoned shirt to Hercules that caused his death.

l. 33. *Which*: to decide the question which of the two. *better*: stronger. *greater*: higher, winning.

l. 34. *turn*: turn up. *weaker hand*: hand of the weaker man.

l. 35. *Alcides*: i.e. Hercules.

l. 36. *blind fortune*: chance that bestows success or failure at haphazard upon the best or the worst.

l. 42. *be advis'd*: act advisedly, act with deliberation, as to which of the two courses to adopt. Portia has some hope that the hard condition attached to the second course (ll. 40–2) might frighten him and lead him to adopt the first, and depart as the six suitors had done before him.

l. 43. *Nor will not*: I never will 'speak to lady afterwards', &c. This emphatic language quickly destroys Portia's hope. The double negative makes the negation emphatic.

l. 44. *forward . . . temple*: for the purpose of taking the oath of l. 40. *temple*: it was a church. but Portia here uses a word that she thinks the heathen prince will understand better than the word 'church'.

l. 45. *Good*: this is merely an epithet meant to conciliate fortune, and cannot mean 'favourable', since good luck could not make him 'cursed'st'.

l. 46. *blest*: the superlative termination in 'cursed'st',

by a bit of grammatical economy practised by Elizabethan writers, belongs to 'blest' also, which therefore stands for 'blessedest'; the spelling of the positive 'blest' makes it sound to the ear as if, itself, it was a superlative.

Scene II

ll. 1–168. The very first words of Launcelot, the clown or fool of the play, and at present servant to Shylock, show that he has what his master has not—a conscience. But the devil, always at home with his master, has been after him too. He cannot bear his master's treatment of him any longer, and wishes to run away from his service. But he consults his conscience first and it tells him not to run away; the devil, without being consulted, tells him to run away. He tells them they are both right and both wrong; and within himself decides to run away. At this juncture enters his old and purblind father, with a present of doves for his son's master, whereupon follows a scene that displays a relation between father and son that was, no doubt, designed to stand in contrast to the relation between father and daughter in this play. The son plays the fool with his father, but behind this irreverent fooling stands the unmistakable love of son for father and of father for son; indeed the fooling is itself a proof of this mutual affection. In contrast to this the relation between Shylock and his daughter will be seen later on. After the son has successfully 'raised the waters' to his father's old eyes, he tells him of his decision and asks him to present the doves, to better purpose, to his future master—a man of a very different character from his old master, and entirely after Launcelot's own heart. The future master opportunely enters; after a great deal of bungling on the father's part, due to excessive haste and profound respect in offering his son's services, which the son makes worse by attempting, every now and then, to put in a word for himself, Launcelot is, to his great joy, engaged, and is ordered a gorgeous livery forthwith.

ll. 1, 2. This sentence sums up the net result of the contest between devil and conscience over Launcelot, and, therefore, is identical in meaning with ll. 28–9, 'The fiend gives . . . I will run.' Between these, the first and the last sentences of this soliloquy, stand the detailed particulars of the contest. Some critics propose to alter

the reading in l. 1 into 'will *not* serve me', but such an emendation seems unnecessary. *will serve me to*: will not stop me from (running away). Launcelot is attempting to quiet the voice of conscience, whose arguments, he says, are too weak to stop his running off.

ll. 4, 5. It is one of the features of the speech of the vulgar or uneducated to be very particular about irrelevant matters. Mrs. Quickly and Juliet's nurse are similar in their wealth of irrelevant speech.

l. 6. *start*: opportunity suddenly offered.

l. 10. *courageous fiend*: either (1) even the devil, brave as he is, or (2) merely an expletive with hardly any meaning, as Bottom, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, similarly exclaims: 'O courageous day!' *pack*: be off at once. *Via*: away; from Italian. and used by a rider to his horse, a captain to his troops, &c.

l. 11. *for the heavens*: for the sake of heaven. There is some humour in making the devil swear, not by hell, but by heaven.

l. 16. *something*: (an adverb) somewhat. *smack*: had a taste or touch of the knave about him.

l. 17. *grow to*: had a 'bad taste' about him, originally used of burnt milk sticking to the bottom of the pan: i. e. he wasn't quite an honest man. In public Launcelot stands up for his father as an honest man.

ll. 20, 21. *Conscience . . . well; fiend . . . well*: one emendation reads 'conscience . . . ill'; another reads 'fiend . . . ill': but they both miss the point. In these two lines Launcelot tells conscience and the devil that they both advise him well: in the next four lines he tells them, in a roundabout way, that they both advise him ill. The emendations proposed forget that Launcelot is irretrievably muddle-headed, and try the hopeless task of making him talk logically.

l. 22. *God bless the mark*: may God avert the evil omen (of mentioning the devil); in 'mark', birth marks, like moles, &c., are probably meant, since they were looked upon as bad omens for the future of the child on whom they appeared.

l. 24. *Saving your reverence*: addressed to the audience, again as an apology for mentioning the devil in their hearing.

l. 26. *incarnal*: his blunder for 'incarnate': the devil in human flesh and blood.

l. 27. *hard*: hard-hearted.

l. 32. *Master Jew's*: this expression shows that Shylock was 'the' Jew, too notorious to need to be called by his own name.

l. 33. *true-begotten father*: Launcelot had read at school and repeated at church words like 'true-begotten son': then, if a son can be so, why can't a father too? is what occurs to his clownish mind.

l. 34. *sand-blind*: a corruption of 'semi-blind', M.E. 'sam-blind', half-blind.

l. 35. *high gravel-blind*: these words are *not* qualified by 'more' preceding, but indicate a denser degree of blindness, just as gravel is of a greater density than sand; similarly 'stone-blind' indicates, to Launcelot's mind, a still greater degree, just as stone is of greater density than gravel. This must have been the process of thought that led him to invent gravel-blindness as being between the degrees of half and complete blindness. *confusions*: tricks to confuse him, by taking advantage of his dim sight; Launcelot meant to use the 'fine' expression 'try conclusions' without knowing exactly what it meant, but makes a malapropism of it, which, however, happily expresses his exact meaning. The first quarto reads 'conclusions', in which case Launcelot may be supposed to have known its meaning: (try) experiments (on him).

l. 39. The directions given by Launcelot are mere nonsense and intended to confuse his father; but by '*indirectly*' he means 'directly'.

l. 41. *marry*: by (the Virgin) Mary.

l. 43. *by God's sonties*: either (1) by God's sanctities, by the holy God, or (2) by God's dear saints; 'sonty' being the 'affectionate' diminutive ('saintie') of 'saint'.

ll. 44–5. Both characters are meant to be clownish, and both are in consequence made to speak in a muddle-headed fashion.

l. 46. *Master Launcelot*: having already been mistaken by his blind father as 'master young gentleman', Launcelot finds a great opportunity for a jest.

l. 47. *will . . . waters*: make him cry, by telling him that his son is dead.

l. 50. *honest . . . man*: an exceedingly poor but honest man.

l. 51. *well to live*: either (1) in good health and likely to enjoy many more years of life, or (2) living in sufficient

comfort, since in ll. 64–5 we get some hint that Launcelot supported his father.

l. 52. *'a*: he; this ''a' for 'he' is a very common spelling in the quartos.

l. 54. i.e. I am talking of plain Launcelot, whom I hope your worship is acquainted with ('friend'). Old Gobbo pointedly omits the word 'master'.

l. 55. *ergo*: Latin, therefore. Launcelot uses it having heard his betters use it in their conversation.

l. 57–8. Though old Gobbo does not mean to address Launcelot himself as 'your mastership', Launcelot is content, and proceeds next to 'raise the waters'.

l. 59. *father*: not necessarily in its usual sense; it frequently expressed veneration for any old man.

ll. 60–1. One wonders where Launcelot has picked up his classics. *Sisters Three*: the Fates, and here the last of them, Atropos, who cuts the thread of life. *branches*: particulars, items.

l. 62. *as you would say*: as one would say.

ll. 64, 65. Old Gobbo bursts into tears while saying this: evidently Launcelot used to support his parents out of his scanty wages.

l. 67. *hovel-post*: post used in building hovels. *Do I . . . prop*: it is best to take this as spoken aside, and *Do you . . . father* as alone spoken aloud, this question being repeated with a variation in l. 72.

l. 71. *God . . . soul*: an expression used only of the dead. Yet in his heart the father has some glimmer of hope that his son may be alive.

l. 78. *Give me your blessing*: Launcelot kneels down, with his *back* to his father.

l. 80. *may*: may be hid long. Launcelot's outburst into proverbs is like that of a brother-fool, Sancho Panza.

ll. 83–6. The first half of this is spoken in a good humouredly snappish tone, the second with comic solemnity. *I am . . . shall be*: I am your son in the past, present, and future; i.e. I am no other than your son, your very own son.

l. 89. *man*: servant.

l. 91. The fact that the 'master young man' knows his wife's name is to old Gobbo conclusive proof that he is his son; satisfied on this point, he calls him by the affectionate 'thou', while before this he had addressed him by the respectful 'you'.

l. 93. *Lord . . . be*: God be praised! meant to express thankfulness to Heaven at having restored him his son whom he thought to be dead. *what a beard*: old Gobbo here fondly strokes what he thinks to be the face of his kneeling son, but which really is his hair hanging down his back and worn long, as was the fashion.

l. 95. *chin*: i.e. what old Gobbo mistakes for Launcelot's chin. *thill-horse*: cart-horse; 'thills' are the shafts of a cart.

l. 97. *grows backward*: comical double meaning: (1) as my beard grows on the back of my head, so Dobbin's tail grows behind him; (2) Dobbin's tail has been growing shorter and thinner. *on . . . on*: a scarcely needed emendation for the folio reading *of . . . of*, which means the same.

l. 99. *how . . . changed*: all due to this luxuriant growth of beard since father and son last met.

l. 102. *Well, well*: purposely ambiguous: (1) we agree very well indeed; (2) the least said about it, the better.

l. 103. *set up my rest*: determined. The metaphor is from card-playing, but it is uncertain whether the exact reference is to the stake or to the wager or to the cards remaining in one's hand; the game itself was called primero, to which there are endless references in Elizabethan writers. Launcelot himself, whether he understands the reference or not, means a quibble between 'resting' (staying with his master) and 'running away'.

l. 104. *a very Jew*: a thorough Jew; see note on III. ii. 224.

l. 106. *you . . . ribs*: to Launcelot's indignation is due this confused incoherence. *tell*: count: he means to say 'rib' where he says 'finger', and 'fingers' where he says 'ribs', and 'your' where he says 'my'.

l. 107. *give me*: give, I beg of you; let me ask you to give; 'ethical' dative.

l. 109. Though starved, Launcelot's heart is set more upon fine clothes than upon good eating; but in the house of such a master there was sure to be the best of both; in l. 154 he gets what he here longs for.

l. 110. *God . . . ground*: To the ends of the earth; but the words have peculiar force coming from one of the dwellers in the little islands of the lagoons of Venice.

l. 111. *I am a Jew*: I am not the good Christian I profess to be.

l. 113. *You may do so*: the loan, then, has been procured and things are being busily arranged for the start for Belmont shortly after supper.

l. 116. *anon*: soon, presently; the older spelling is 'anone', and the literal meaning is 'in (an-) one moment'.

l. 120. *Gramercy*: much thanks, Fr. *grand merci*. *wouldst... me*: do you want anything from me? 'Wouldst' here is a substantive verb, wish for.

l. 122. Ergo (as Launcelot wants it to be inferred) a rich master's servant cannot be a poor man.

l. 124. *infection*: affection, wish; old Gobbo tries to show his respect for a man of the upper classes by using 'fine' words, which he half understands, and which he thinks 'fine' people use in talk among themselves.

l. 129. *saving... reverence*: with all due reverence for your worship; hoping your worship will excuse me (for mentioning the unpleasant fact).

l. 130. *are scarce cater-cousins*: are scarcely on terms of even distant goodwill towards each other. *cater-cousins*: either (1) cousins four times removed, Fr. *quatre*, four, or (2) mess-fellows, chums; literally, friends whose catering is in common.

l. 133. There would have been some point in '*I hope*' if he had said 'an *honest* old man'. *frutify*: he means 'certify'.

l. 135. Even at present in old-fashioned parts of the East, as here in the mediaeval West, it is customary to make a present before preferring a petition or suit. *dish of doves*: doves meant for your table.

l. 137. They have been 'brief' so often that the brevity threatens to be tediously long, when it is cut short by Bassanio, l. 141. *is impertinent*: he means 'is pertinent, concerns (me)'.

ll. 138-40. *by*: from. *honest... old... poor*: another fine muddle: he meant to say 'this old and poor man; and though poor yet honest; though it is I who say he is honest'. A son may be expected to say that his father is honest when he is not really so.

l. 143. *defect*: effect, substance.

l. 146. *preferr'd*: recommended. *preferment*: advancement, promotion. Shylock's recommendation of Launcelot is not in the play, but we are sure he made it from his words in II. v. 49-51.

l. 149. *proverb*: 'God's grace is gear (i. e. wealth)'

enough.' Launcelot's originality displays itself in the application; he divides the proverb into two, and applies the two halves to two different persons.

l. 155. *More guarded*: more richly ornamented: 'guards' were the borders and seams of garments, and 'to guard' was to ornament these.

ll. 156, 157. *in*: go in, in the language of the stage, equivalent to 'come away' in ordinary speech. *I cannot . . . no . . . head*: playful irony; he means to say that he has not only easily got service under a new master, but has got it through *his own* eloquence.

ll. 158–9. *table*: palm (in the language of palmistry) on which one's fortune is written. *which . . . fortune*: the imperfect construction has been completed in two ways: (1) the antecedent of 'which' is 'table'; in this case supply 'that' (conjunction) after 'book', and 'I'll be hanged' or 'I am much mistaken' after 'fortune': the meaning is that his palm assures him on oath, as it were, that he shall have better fortune than any man in Italy. (2) The antecedent of 'which' (here equivalent to 'who') is 'man'; in this case supply 'I'll be hanged' after 'book', and take 'I shall . . . fortune' separately as an independent sentence with a full stop before 'I'. The meaning is that no man in Italy can show a luckier palm when he lays his open hand on a book (the Bible), to swear by it (in a law-court).

l. 160. *a simple line of life*: all this irony proceeds from the excessive good spirits he is in at his luck. One of the markings of the palm is called the 'line of life'.

ll. 161–163. Launcelot's arithmetic is not very accurate, 11 and 9 do not make 15. *simple coming in*: small income (in this sort of property).

l. 165. *simple*: irony for 'marvellous'. Launcelot's frequent use of the word 'simple' suggests a meaning that he does not see, namely, happening to a fool.

l. 166. *for this gear*: for this good luck that she promises me.

l. 167. The parting from Shylock, it is clear, will not be long or painful.

l. 169. *think on this*: attend to what I am going to say.

l. 170. *These things*: the things they had been talking about before entering at l. 113. *bestow'd*: stowed away on board ship.

ll. 174–205. Compared with the grave Antonio, Bassanio

appeared as a gay, reckless youth; but now, compared with the volatile, mercurial Gratiano, he looks a very model of sobriety and seriousness.

l. 177. *to*: to make to. *obtain'd*: Bassanio is in high spirts and grants the suit before knowing what it is. Scan 'it' as a hypersyllable.

l. 179. *Why . . . must*: spoken after a pause, for Bassanio finds that, in his generous humour, he has granted too much. *hear thee*: the unemphatic 'thee' is, by loose grammar, substituted for the emphatic and grammatical nominative 'thou', because the imperative in itself is emphatic enough (this use of 'thee' is distinct from its use as a reflexive). The change from 'you' to 'thee' and 'thou' shows that Bassanio adopts the tone of friendly advice and warning to a hare-brained youth.

l. 183. *show*: appear.

l. 184. *too liberal*: unbecomingly free and bold, so as to be likely to give offence. *pain*: pains.

l. 185. *modesty*: moderation.

l. 186. *skipping*: flighty. *spirit*: a monosyllable, as it often is in Elizabethan English, when it is pronounced and sometimes spelt 'sprite'.

l. 189. *habit*: behaviour; the word is played upon in l. 201.

l. 190. *now and then*: he cannot give up the habit altogether; Gratiano cannot bring himself to talk seriously; the whole of this speech shows flippancy.

l. 191. *Wear*: carry; this meaning is obvious, but it is unusual in Shakespeare. *look demurely*: look grave, serious.

ll. 192–3. *grace*: a short prayer before and after meals *is saying*: is being said. It was once the custom to keep the hat on during meals; numerous engravings (e. g. in Froissart and Monstrelet) show this to have been the case.

l. 194. *observance of civility*: solemn, courtly formalities of refined society.

l. 195. *sad ostent*: outward appearance of seriousness.

l. 201. *suit of mirth*: Bassanio plays upon Gratiano's word 'habit' in l. 189.

SCENE III

Jessica's home is a hell to her, and made so by her father. This is the justification of the step she is about to take—to elope with a Christian lover and become a Christian herself.

l. 1. *so*: as you say you mean to.

l. 4. Jessica at least is not miserly, though this generous gift is really a bribe.

l. 5. *soon*: shortly: but there is an expression found often in Shakespeare, 'soon at night', which clearly means this very night, to-night, and the similar expression here may mean 'this evening at supper time'.

l. 10. *exhibit*: (1) a comic mistake for 'inhibit', prevent my tongue from uttering my feelings; (2) (tears) show what my tongue wishes to express but cannot.

l. 20. *strife*: this struggle in her mind between love for Lorenzo and duty to her father.

Scene IV

Lorenzo, who has an object in view, proposes a masquerading party at Bassanio's supper: the others to whom he makes the proposal receive it coldly and raise difficulties. Launcelot delivers Jessica's letter, and as soon as the masquerading is found to be connected with a love affair, they all second it with the greatest warmth. To Gratiano Lorenzo confides the whole plot for the elopement.

l. 1. *Nay*: don't refuse; Lorenzo is trying to overcome the unwillingness of the others. *in*: during.

l. 2. *us*: ourselves, reflexive. *and return*: it used to be a fashion at parties for some of the guests to leave unobserved, disguise themselves, and rejoin the rest as new-comers. Henry VIII did so at a feast given by Wolsey.

l. 4. *preparation*: provision in masquerading dresses, &c.

l. 5. *spoke us of*: bespoken, ordered.

l. 6. *it*: either (1) the antecedent is the masquerade that they had been talking of before and on entering; or (2) the whole affair: in this case no antecedent is required. *quaintly*: elegantly, prettily; it is in this sense that Ariel (in *The Tempest*) is 'quaint'.

l. 10. *break up*: break open, unseal.

l. 11. *seem to signify*: he means, 'it may perhaps explain'.

l. 12. *hand*: hand-writing; but the meaning is different in l. 14.

l. 15. *By your leave*: permit me (to leave your presence).

l. 19. *Hold here*: Fr. *tiens*, equivalent to the modern idiom 'there', or 'here' or 'look here'. *take this*: he offers him a gratuity, not a letter.

l. 21. *Go*: come. *masque*: masquerade.

l. 23. *of*: with. *torch-bearer*: Jessica, of course.

l. 26. *Some hour*: about an hour; so elsewhere, 'some seven o'clock'.

ll. 33–7. A lover's way of seeing things: if Shylock ever goes to heaven, it will be because his daughter deserves to go there; but if *she* is unlucky, it will be because her father deserves to be so. By the Roman Catholic doctrine of 'works of supererogation' the good works of a saint, over and above what is needed for the salvation of his own soul, are allowed to go to the credit of a sinner's soul. *she* in l. 36 is, of course, misfortune.

l. 37. *faithless*: unbelieving, infidel.

l. 38. *go*; see l. 21.

SCENE V

This scene affords us a survey of Shylock's domestic life of which we had a first glimpse in I. iii. 173, 174. A master habitually nagging at his servant, a father habitually harsh to his daughter: in return, the servant glad to have left his service, the daughter preparing to leave his house, which should have been a home for her, but which the father has made a prison. She is reluctant to approach him when he calls her; she is called, on the present occasion, to be begged to look after *his*—not *their*—house, since the servant that looked after it is gone, and to be strictly enjoined to be her own jailer, since the guard whom he made to keep watch over her is gone too. The father is invited to dine out, but, because he cannot trust his daughter, is half-minded not to go. He goes at last, in order that by eating their dinner he may make those Christians poorer by the cost of a dinner: and in order to quicken his daughter's vigilance, he threatens to come back at any moment. Such is the picture presented here of Shylock's home-life. This interpretation of this scene will be supported below in the notes to particular passages, which at the same time should make clear the error of the view that sees, in this scene, proofs of Shylock's *love* for his daughter.

ll. 1–10. In the intervals of nagging at his late servant for his past offences, Shylock calls harshly and impatiently for his daughter, who appears only after repeated calls

and coldly asks what his pleasure is. She never addresses him as 'father'.

l. 3. *What*: expresses impatience. *gormandize*: so Shylock says; and we have heard Launcelot say the contrary in II. ii. 105.

l. 10. Who can mistake the icy coldness of these words? The latter part was for long the usual way in which servants in England answered a call from master or mistress.

l. 11. *bid forth*: invited out.

l. 14. In addition to the grand scheme against Antonio, this is one of two little plots of Shylock's against Christians, the other being given in ll. 48–51. He will dine with Christians that he may make them poorer by the cost of the dinner, and he has recommended Launcelot to Bassanio that a wasteful servant may help a spendthrift master to squander the loan all the quicker!

ll. 15, 16. *Jessica, my girl*: these words have been repeatedly quoted by those who try to make out a case for Shylock, as a proof of his love for his daughter. They are nothing of the kind, but, on the contrary, only show the old miser's love for his money, for the sake of which he addresses his daughter in wheedling tones, asking her to keep good watch over it, now that his 'unthrifty knave' is no longer there to mount 'fearful guard'. The same selfish motive, one fancies, crops up in the very pronoun 'my' before 'house': we should have expected 'our', when father spoke to daughter of their common home.

l. 17. *towards*: aimed at, against.

l. 18. *to-night*: last night.

l. 20. *reproach*: another of Launcelot's mistakes; he meant 'approach'.

l. 21. Shylock sees in the proper sense of the word a meaning that Launcelot, who used it, is wholly innocent of; he expects to be reproached when, as he hopes, he enforces the penalty enjoined in the bond.

l. 22. Another reading is admissible, viz. 'an' for 'and' meaning 'if', and a comma after 'together'. It would even be unnecessary to change 'and', since the conditional 'an' was sometimes spelt 'and'. Launcelot is slyly mysterious, and enjoys the anxiety he causes in Shylock's mind. *not for nothing*: i.e. the bleeding was a prognostic.

l. 25. *Black Monday*: Easter Monday, April 14, 1360, so called from a storm during which many men perished

from cold in Edward III's army, then besieging Paris. *six o'clock*: this may be meant to be a reminder to Jessica of the hour in the afternoon.

l. 26. *Ash-Wednesday*: the first day of Lent. *was four years ago*: a colloquial or 'vulgar' idiom. Of course, the whole of his speech is merely the nonsense of the clown.

l. 30. *wry-neck'd fife*: either (1) fifer, who has to put his face all on one side while playing, or (2) fife, playing on which requires the player to do so, or (3) fife, which in those days had a crook (though now it is quite straight).

l. 33. *varnish'd faces*: faces having painted masks on: with a secondary meaning, hypocritical, outwardly smooth.

l. 36. *My sober house*: Shylock again speaks like a Pharisee. *Jacob's staff*: the staff with which the patriarch Jacob passed over the Jordan, Gen. xxxii. 10. Shylock seems to have taken this 'thrifty' patriarch as what Christians would call his '*patron saint*'.

l. 37. *of*: for.

l. 41. *for*: in spite of (all his exhortations).

l. 43. *Will*: who will. *worth a Jewess' eye*: a quibbling meaning: (1) the proverb itself was 'worth a Jewës (i. e. Jew's) eye', the 'Jewës' being the possessive masculine, pronounced as a disyllable. In the Middle Ages kings and potentates permitted Jews to act as money-lenders to their subjects on condition that they paid them on demand a portion of their profits: when the demand was not readily complied with, torture was resorted to, either to extort money or, on failure, as a punishment. Thus there are stories of Richard I and John pulling out the teeth of their 'Jewish milk-cows', and it is easy to fancy a threat like this—'either you pay down so much or I'll put out one of your eyes'. (2) Worth a Jewess looking at. This meaning would be intelligible to Jessica alone. In these two lines Launcelot rises to the poetic height of composing a doggerel couplet.

l. 44. *Hagar's offspring*: an Ishmaelite, a Gentile. Hagar, Abraham's handmaid and mother of Ishmael, was driven out into the wilderness, and became the ancestress of one branch of the Semitic race—the Arabs of the desert. Isaac was the son of Sarah, Abraham's wife, and the ancestor of the other branch--the 'chosen race'. Shylock, however, looks upon all Gentiles, including the Christians of Europe, as Ishmaelites.

l. 45. Shylock, so acute in business, shows himself to be rather obtuse in swallowing this palpable falsehood.

l. 46. *patch*: fool; from the patchwork or motley dress worn by the professional fools kept by the rich.

l. 47. *profit*: any work likely to bring profit to me, his master; this quality was the cardinal virtue in Shylock's eyes.

l. 48. *wild cat*: this animal prowls about at night and sleeps during the day.

l. 50. Here is Shylock's second little plot to be revenged on Christians; see note on l. 14.

l. 52. This is meant to enforce his exhortations to her not to look out of the window, &c., but to 'look to his house': he distrusts her, and this distrust earns her a little sympathy in her disloyalty.

l. 54. The rest of the line is filled up by a silent inward chuckle.

l. 57. The tense shows that the speaker's mind is made up. Portia obeys even the unreasonable will of a father: Jessica disobeys the will of a father, not unreasonable in itself.

Scene VI

There is friendship and friendship: that between the royal merchant and the handsome and accomplished spendthrift is of a kind different from that displayed here in ll. 1–20, where these two 'knowing men about town' talk disparagingly, behind his back, about their dear friend and the young lady he is about to elope with; though they heartily lend their help to the fun of the elopement. As arranged, the young lady, not forgetting prudence in the midst of love, helps herself liberally out of the money and jewels left in her charge. She then talks prettily about her disguise as a boy, which calls forth both the admiration of the masqueraders and another tribute to her beauty, her wisdom, and her truth from her lover. At the end we are reminded that it is high time to embark for Belmont, and to Belmont the next scene changes.

l. 1. *penthouse*: shed; a corrupt spelling (due to a supposed derivation from 'house') of 'pentice', a sloping roof, from Lat. *pendere*, to hang.

l. 2. *make stand*: take up our station.

l. 3. *out-dwells*: overstays, is late (in keeping his appointment, 'his hour').

l. 4. *run before the clock*: come before the appointed time.

l. 5. *pigeons*: though in mythology *doves* draw Venus's chariot.

l. 6. *to seal*: i.e. to enable the goddess herself to 'seal love's bonds'.

l. 7. *obliged faith*: faithfulness already sealed between lovers, which therefore they are bound ('obliged') to keep. This covert insinuation of infidelity on Lorenzo's part is put into vivid metaphor by Gratiano.

l. 8. *holds*: holds true, is true.

l. 9. *sits down*: supply 'with' to complete the construction.

l. 10. *untread again*: tread back, go back over.

l. 11. *tedious measures*: paces that are tedious on repetition. Riding horses used in those days to be taught artificial paces, like curvets, demi-voltes, &c., that only circus horses nowadays perform.

l. 12. *pace them first*: supply 'with' as in l. 9.

l. 14. *younker*: stripling (eager for the pleasures of life).

l. 15. *scarfed*: dressed out with flags. *her*: for the sake of the simile this word and 'she' in l. 17 should have been 'his' and 'he': but the feminine is so firmly associated with the word 'ship', that even here the association persists. *native*: where she was launched.

l. 17. *prodigal*: the mention of the *return* of the prodigal here makes certain what his setting out in l. 14 left uncertain, that the reference is to the parable of the prodigal son in the Bible, Luke xv. 11-32.

l. 18. *over-weather'd*: weather-beaten, battered by storms.

l. 19. *Lean*: wasted, with his wealth dissipated.

l. 21. *your*: supply 'grant me' before. *abode*: delay.

l. 24. In scansion the fourth foot is made up of the word 'then' *and a pause* before he says 'approach'.

l. 25. *my father Jew*: spoken sarcastically.

l. 30. *whom*: the folio reads 'who', ungrammatically used often for 'whom', for the sake of emphasis, and equivalent in sense to 'who is he whom': in such cases the accusatives of pronouns do not convey the emphasis wanted.

l. 32. God and your love for me are the only

witnesses of my love for you. This is not quite true, for Lorenzo has taken his friends into his confidence.

l. 33. *worth the pains*: worth the trouble of catching (being full of valuables).

l. 34. *you do not look*: so that you cannot look.

l. 35. *exchange*: change of dress, boy's disguise.

l. 41. *shames*: the plural means acts of shame; namely, running away, robbing her father, and putting on man's clothing.

l. 42. *are too—too light*: (1) are but too clear, too evident (in the light of the candle); (2) show a light character (referring to her running away): 'too too' is a kind of superlative or intensive of 'too'.

l. 43. *office of discovery*: acting as your torch-bearer will only serve to expose me and my shame.

l. 44. *And*: while on the contrary. *obscured*: keep myself in the dark.

l. 45. *garnish*: dress.

l. 47. *close*: dark, keeping things secret. *doth play the runaway*: is hastening on towards daylight. Night is, like Jessica, a runaway, but in a different sense.

l. 49. *gild myself*: furnish myself with gold. These five speeches of Jessica's show two sides of her character: on the one side a bright sprightly nature, uttering the prettiest of sentiments, that found no vent in the gloomy prison-house of the Jew, and no company in his harsh person; on the other side a very clear knowledge of the value of money (her way of spending it will be seen by and by).

l. 51. *by my hood*: he swears appropriately by his new costume—by the hood of the masquerading dress—as if the volatile Gratiano had become a monk. *no Jew*: for how *can* a Jew be beautiful? The word is both masculine and feminine, see II. iii. 11.

l. 52. *Beshrew me*: a milder oath than 'may I be accursed', which, however, it literally means. *but I*: if I do not, unless I do; the original meaning of 'but', namely, except, is evident here.

l. 53. *wise*: the only proof up to now of her wisdom is the casket in his hand. It looks much as if Lorenzo was an adventurer too, but genuinely in love with his lady and not with her money only. *if*: as far as.

l. 54. *if that*: if; this use of 'that' is similar to constructions in the Romanic languages, e. g. *que* and *che* in

French and Italian. *true*: true judges of beauty, not mistaken.

l. 55. *true*: here means faithful in love.

l. 63. *nine o'clock*: an indication of the lapse of time since the supper-hour at six.

l. 64. The masquerade—or rather its beginning—having served its purpose of covering the elopement, is summarily put off, as the change of the wind necessitates immediate embarkation. *come about*: veered round.

l. 67. *on't*: of it; this is an Elizabethan use of 'on' for 'of' with verbs indicating thought or feeling.

SCENE VII

There is no need to transfer this scene, as some have proposed, so that it may follow immediately after Scene i, and to make the two to be Scenes iv and v of Act I, thus giving each of the first three acts a casket-scene: this transfer would secure mere symmetry of form at the expense of dramatic effect. As things stand, the first act ends with the momentous loan-scene; and we are kept in suspense till the closing scenes of the second act as to the results of two out of the three casket-scenes.

Morocco makes a fine exterior to be his standard in making his choice, and it is the consuming vanity of the pompous barbarian that leads him to adopt such a standard. Arragon makes merit to be his; but it is a false idea of merit drawn from the exaggerated sense of personal 'honour' that proverbially marks the class of which he is the type—the Spanish hidalgo. Bassanio makes it his standard to risk all that he has, and he wins; for all he has is himself and his love, and love for Portia was meant to be the test of the choice. Morocco's 'all' is a very great deal in his own eyes, and he will not hazard it for a dull leaden exterior: his merit, in his own estimation, fully qualifies him for the lady. He might have stopped at the silver casket, had not the gold one tickled his ambition by promising what many men desire. He will not be satisfied unless he cuts out these 'many men' and carries away the lady triumphantly before their disappointed eyes. He chooses, and finds a hollow death's-head, with a scroll setting forth the hollowness of his vanity.

l. 1. *discover*: uncover, open to view.

l. 2. *several*: different.

l. 4. *which*: the folio reading is 'who': the accent has to fall upon the emphatic word 'this'; therefore the preceding word must be unemphatic for the sake of the scansion; this is done by using the unemphatic 'who', meaning 'which'.

l. 8. *dull*: what a relief must the use of this epithet bring to Portia's mind at the very outset: there are several hints that she knew in which casket her portrait was, as will be seen by and by. *blunt*: plain, repellant.

l. 12. *withal*: with it; he who gets the picture will also get the original.

l. 13. *Some god*: Shakespeare, putting down Morocco as a pagan, puts him down as a polytheist too: the Moors were Moslems and therefore monotheists.

l. 14. *back again*: a second time ('again'), but in reverse order ('back'); what follows shows this to be meant here, but usually in Elizabethan English 'back again' is a tautology for 'again'.

l. 17. *hazard*: must hazard.

l. 20. A mind rich in worth does not degrade itself by choosing a thing whose very appearance shows, at a single glance, that it is base metal.

l. 25. *even hand*: impartial mind: the lines following show how partial to himself his mind really was.

l. 26. If your value is equal to ('by', in accordance with) your own valuation of yourself. The line is either hyper-syllabic, or '-tion' in 'estimation' is a disyllable, and the line an Alexandrine.

l. 27. *enough*: very much.

l. 30. *disabling*: disparaging, undervaluing.

l. 34. *than these*: than in these. *in love . . . deserve*: because, as he thinks, his love is very great. There is no need to read 'deserve her', as it destroys the point that lies in repeating the very word of the inscription; of course, the sense obviously supplies 'her' here.

l. 40. *shrine*: image in a shrine. *mortal-breathing saint*: the spirit of a saint embodied in a living human frame.

l. 41. *Hyrcanian*: Hyrcania was the Roman name for northern Persia, south of the Caspian.

l. 42. *throughfares*: thoroughfares; the hyperbole is softened when we remember the vast caravans formed by the numerous trains of these Eastern suitors.

l. 43. *come view*: omission in the infinitive of 'to' after verbs of motion.

l. 44. The ocean is meant, whose waves dash against the very sky.

l. 47. *As . . . brook*: as if it was nothing more than stepping across a brook.

l. 50. *it were, &c.*: lead would be too base a material for her coffin to be made of.

l. 51. *rib*: enclose. *cerecloth*: shroud made of wax-cloth. *obscure*: dark; accented on the first syllable.

l. 53. *ten times*: Morocco, it is clear, knew the correct ratio of exchange between gold and silver at about the time this play was written. It was 1 to 10 or 1 to 11. *to . . . gold*: when compared with refined gold.

l. 56. *A coin*: the gold coin called an 'angel', worth 10*s*., and owing that name to a play on words, 'angelus' and 'Anglus'—'angel-coin' and 'English coin'.

l. 57. *insculp'd upon*: carved in relief on the *outside*. The figure was that of St. Michael: whereas Portia's portrait lies *inside* (l. 59).

l. 59. *all*: an adjective; entire, and not merely as a figure in relief. There would be no point in taking 'all' as an adverb qualifying 'within'. *key*: to be pronounced 'kay' (which was the old pronunciation) so as to rhyme with 'may'.

l. 60. *thrive*: succeed, be fortunate.

l. 61. *There . . . prince*: the tone in which these words are uttered plainly shows that Portia knew the portrait was not in that casket; see II. ix. 53, and note.

ll. 67, 68. Many men have sacrificed themselves, body and soul, merely to possess gold. *life . . . sold*: perhaps there is a reference to the belief about '*compacts*' with the devil, such as Faust, or the architect of Strasburg Cathedral, is supposed to have made. *But*: only, merely. *my outside*: gold, of which this casket in which I am enclosed is made. It is the death's-head that is supposed to speak.

l. 69. *tombs*: this is an emendation of the quarto and folio reading 'timber', which is explained as 'coffins', the difficulty both as to number and metre being got over by omitting 'do'.

l. 71. The construction is this: 'had you been as old in judgement as (you are) young in limbs.'

l. 72. The answer you would have received would not have been inscribed *in such terms as these*.

l. 73. *is cold*: is unsuccessful, has failed.

l. 75. *heat*: ardour of love. *frost*: this is an inversion of a proverb, 'farewell, frost,' meaning the departure of an unwelcome presence.

l. 77. *part*: depart; the verb has this meaning in French.

l. 78. At Morocco's exit Portia abandons her courteous restraint and expresses her thankfulness at his failure.

l. 79. *complexion*: to save Portia from the very same charge of judging merely by appearances to which Morocco had laid himself open, we must take this word to refer, not merely to his being a 'blackamoor', but to his temperament, which was that of a savage as displayed in II. i. 1–11. Even so, these lines show Portia to us as a merry young girl, and heighten the contrast to the moral and intellectual strength she later on displays.

SCENE VIII

The runaway couple's successful elopement gives rise to much frantic behaviour on the part of Shylock. His comic words and action, that here expose him to the jeers and contemptuous laughter of street-boys, form a striking contrast to the terribly tragic rôle he plays at the trial scene, which exposes him to the profound indignation of the whole ducal court, when again he is successfully foiled. The comic doings of Shylock are not represented on the stage, but are only narrated, in order that the first note of the impending tragedy here struck may not be weakened. That note consists in the first vague rumour of a Venetian ship being lost at sea. This rumour makes his friends think of Antonio, and of the day the bond will fall due, and of the temper into which losses, already actually suffered, have thrown Shylock, and how, therefore, he is likely to act when the bond falls due. [It is reasonable to infer from this that his daughter's robbery of him sharpened his appetite for revenge upon a co-religionist of the man for whose sake she had robbed him; but is there sufficient proof in this to maintain, as some do, that the *first* idea of revenge occurs here to Shylock, and that in making Antonio sign the bond with the penalty attached,

he was really indulging, as he professed, in 'merry sport'? His soliloquy and the whole of his demeanour in that scene should be enough to give the lie to this attempt to mitigate the fiendish character of the revenge he meant to take.] Everybody feels glad at Shylock's loss actually suffered, but, summer friends as those two men are, even they feel sad at the mere prospect of loss to Antonio. The good feeling they here show contrasts them and everybody else to Shylock, who is the *one* human being in the play who has no good feeling for anybody. Here, at the trial scene, and everywhere, Shylock stands alone as the one bad man, without any goodness in his nature at all.

l. 1. *I . . . sail*: I saw Bassanio go on board ship, and saw the ship set sail.

l. 4. *raised*: roused from sleep. Evidently, Shylock had discovered his loss on his return home from that fateful supper, and had *immediately* gone to the duke, at dead of night.

l. 5. Surely, the Venetian 'police' might have done this without the duke going personally: but this is a play, not a history.

l. 7. *there*: might have meant 'thereupon' (at once), were it not for the 'but': with the 'but' in the text, 'there' seems to mean where he was, namely, on shore.

l. 8. *gondola*: little passenger-boats on the canals of Venice, taking the place of cabs in the streets of other cities. On this occasion it would seem that the eloping couple went out to Bassanio's ship after it had put out from port. Antonio parted with Bassanio at the wharf, no doubt, and would not, therefore, have seen Lorenzo and Jessica.

l. 10. *certified*: assured.

l. 12. *passion*: violent grief.

l. 13. Scan thus: Sò stránge | outrá | gèous and | só vár | iàblè. The variability was the most markedly comic feature, hence the 'so' before it is accented as well as the first syllable of 'variable', making the foot to be a spondee.

l. 14. He is called a dog here, a villain in l. 4, and throughout there is not a spark of sympathy, but a chorus of delight, at his misfortune.

l. 16. *Christian ducats*: this illustrates his 'confused passion': what was in his mind was 'O the vile Christian' and 'O my ducats'. We may see another meaning

in addition; namely, ducats won from or robbed from Christians, through usury.

ll. 18, 19. This, too, may be confused passion, but it may also be intentional exaggeration of his loss: he doubles and then quadruples his first statement of the amount.

l. 25. *look he keep*: see that he keeps; 'keep' is a subjunctive singular. *keep his day*: pay up on the appointed day; see I. iii. 161, 'break his day'.

l. 26. *pay for this*: be forced to recoup this loss to Shylock. The mere thought of possible consequences to Antonio from the incidents that had hitherto made them laugh jeeringly at Shylock, sobers them instantly.

l. 27. *reason'd*: talked; this is a common meaning of this word in French.

l. 29. *miscarried*: was wrecked, was lost.

l. 30. *richly fraught*: freighted with a valuable cargo.

l. 31. *he*: the Frenchman.

l. 32. *were not his*: might not be his.

l. 33. *You were best*: you had best, it would be best for you; the Elizabethan 'were' is more correct grammar than the current 'had', the full construction being 'it were best for you'; similarly 'I were best' in v. i. 177.

l. 39. *Slubber*: perform in haste, slur over; originally, to sully, soil.

l. 41. *of*: from.

l. 42. *your mind of love*: your loving mind, your mind occupied with love for Portia.

l. 44. *ostents of love*: external display of your love by generous expenditure of money.

l. 45. *conveniently*: becomingly; so that the word is superfluously used with 'become'. The old meaning of 'convenient' was proper, suitable; e.g. 'feed me with food convenient for me' in the Bible.

l. 46. *even there*: even as he spoke these words; another reading is 'even then'.

l. 48. *with affection*: much affected, deeply moved. *sensible*: sensitive, full of sensibility.

l. 49. *wrung*: l. 47 shows that he did this with the hand he had put behind him, in order not to let him see his face unmanned with tears.

l. 50. *only loves . . . him*: loves the world only for him—this is the order of words necessitated by this sense.

l. 52. *quicken*: enliven, cheer up. *embraced heaviness*: sadness that he seems to hug; sadness that seems to be a luxury to him.

SCENE IX

Arragon begins with what Morocco did not—a conscientious enumeration of the terms of the oath he has taken: there, at the very outset, stands evident the man of honour. The leaden casket, again much to Portia's relief, he, like Morocco, summarily dismisses; the gold casket detains him longer, but is also dismissed by him for the very reason for which it was chosen by the Moor. The haughty aristocrat will not desire what 'the many' desire, it is not the outside that attracts him, as it did the superficial judgement of the vainglorious barbarian, but the inner meaning of the motto, and it is that on the silver casket which offers a meaning that appeals most strongly to his mind. 'Honour with merit', 'honour to him to whom honour is due'—this is the meaning. Honour has too often been bestowed upon the corrupt, the undeserving, the dishonourable; neglect and dishonour have too often been the lot of true merit; let this wrong be righted, this practice reversed. His own case is one in which this reversal may take present effect; he is one who 'deserves much'—he assumes that as a thing beyond doubt or question. Who will deny that in all this Arragon shows a right sense of the disproportion between merit and its recognition, between being honourable and being honoured, that the history of man's dealings with man has too often displayed? But this right feeling upon this question—here he commits his fatal mistake—*is not love*; love sacrifices itself, merit demands for itself: love gives, merit asks to have given. It is for this reason that Arragon's fine plea is ruled out as irrelevant, and he is non-suited in this court of love.

l. 1. *draw*: draw apart or open; the word would in current English mean to close, as indeed it does in Elizabethan English too; see l. 84. *straight*: straightway.

l. 5. *I*: her portrait is meant, of course, but the use of 'I' is significant here, for with her portrait she herself goes.

ll. 11, 12. *fail of*: miss, fail to choose; there are several instances of this use of 'of' with 'fail' in Shakespeare.

l. 13. *marriage*: three syllables, as in French.

l. 14. The deficiency in the line is filled up by a long and thoughtful pause. It is true the Moor made very free with the lady's name, while the Spaniard mentions it only

once; but love—true love—is as absent in the first as in the second case. The Moor wanted Portia to be a priceless accession to his harem, the Spaniard wanted her to be the crowning accession to the other honours he enjoyed.

l. 18. *to hazard*: infinitive verb, but may be a noun with omission of 'the'. The word appears on the lead casket and Portia is incautious in using it. *worthless self*: this is a bit of conventional modesty.

l. 19. *so . . . me*: and I also have made myself ready—am prepared—to carry out those injunctions. *Fortune*: may fortune, good luck, betide.

l. 20. *base lead*: he may merely mean to distinguish lead by the common epithet by which alchemy distinguished 'base metals' from the two 'noble metals'; but he may further mean to express his personal estimation of the leaden casket; if so, here again, relief is not denied to Portia's mind.

l. 22. *shall look fairer*: must look more inviting.

ll. 25, 26. *that . . . multitude*: this curious Elizabethan construction has the same meaning as the current English 'the fool multitude may be meant by that many': 'by' in the older construction means 'with reference to' ('may be meant by' meaning 'may point to', 'may be applicable to'), while in the later construction, 'by' is the ordinary preposition of instrumentality.

l. 27. *fond eye*: foolish judgement drawn from appearances.

l. 28. Scan thus: Which pries | nòt tò | th' intérior | bùt like | thè mártlet. The sense is 'but is like the martlet which builds', &c.

l. 29. *in the weather*: in situations exposed to wind and weather. *outward wall*: best taken as 'outer side of the wall'.

l. 30. In the direct path of accidents and exposed to their full violence.

l. 31. *I will*: there is a strong emphasis on 'will'. This determined resolve well suits the exclusiveness of the Spanish hidalgo, and is the direct opposite of that of the Moor to choose with the many.

l. 32. *jump with*: agree with.

l. 34. *to thee*: I turn to thee.

l. 35. *title*: inscription; Latin sense.

ll. 37–49. This fine exposition of the maxim 'honour due

to merit', and of its neglect in practice, is marred by the arrogant 'assumption' of l. 51.

ll. 37–9. For no one should set about to overreach fortune (by asking her for what he does not deserve), and no one should thus succeed in obtaining the outward marks of honour without bearing the inward stamp of merit. *cozen*: cheat; this consists of trying to get what one does not deserve. *fortune*: chance that bestows what one desires but does not deserve. *honourable*: honoured; this is the difficult word, as it here means 'receiving honour whether deserved or not', whereas its usual meaning is 'deserving honour' whether receiving it or not.

l. 40. To be honoured without meriting honour; to be honoured without being honourable.

l. 41. *estates*: dignity, status. *degrees*: rank.

l. 42. *deriv'd*: obtained. *clear*: either (1) pure spotless, opposed to corrupt; or (2) bright, brilliant.

l. 43. *purchas'd*: obtained; the original meaning of 'purchase' was to obtain by the chase, by effort.

l. 44. *cover*: keep their hats on (as superiors in merit and in honour). *stand bare*: stand bareheaded (as inferiors in both merit and honour).

l. 45. *be commanded*: explains the metaphor in 'stand bare', as *command* explains that in 'cover'.

ll. 46–9. The metaphor in the four lines is from winnowing; but one-half of each of the two sentences that make up these four lines is unmetaphorical and the other half only is metaphorical. In plain language the meaning of the whole is this: how much of the really dishonourable would be found mixed up with what men call honourable, and how much of the really honourable mixed up with what men call dishonourable. *low peasantry*: of base birth. *glean'd*: sifted; but as we commonly speak of grain being gleaned, it is better to read 'pick'd' in l. 46, and 'glean'd' in l. 48.

l. 47. *of*: this is the 'of' of metaphor or apposition: honour *is* the seed.

l. 48. *Pick'd*: gathered. *chaff*: this is the metaphor for 'low peasantry', base-born men. *ruin*: refuse; the same as 'chaff' in meaning, if the metaphor must be continued: but very likely a new metaphor is introduced in the word 'ruin', and is continued in 'varnish'd', in which case they mean 'decay' and 'restored anew to their old brightness', by being renamed 'honour'.

l. 51. The line is an Alexandrine, unless 'I'll 'ssume' be taken as the first foot. *assume*: supply 'to myself', i. e. claim; in this claim lies the arrogance of the claimant, and the justification of his humiliation. *desert*: merit; the fact that I deserve much.

l. 53. What you find there was not worth this long deliberation. Spoken aside. This speech of Portia's is another indication that she knew in which of the caskets her portrait was; see II. vii. 61, and note.

l. 55. *schedule*: scroll or paper with an inscription on it.

l. 57. *unlike*: supply 'art thou to'. *hopes . . . deservings*: what I hoped to get and what I ought to have got. In the word 'deservings' lies that egotism that is inconsistent with true love, and that proves fatal to the hopes of these two suitors in whom inordinate vanity and inordinate self-esteem were stronger than love.

ll. 59–60. Addressed to Portia; the tone and language show that his self-esteem had been more hurt than his love had been disappointed.

l. 61. *To offend*: Portia's offence, as she calls it, lies in this, that the prince's hopes about her have been disappointed without his deserving it. *and judge*: and to answer his question whether he has deserved to be disappointed. With ready tact she avoids giving the inevitably awkward answer 'yes', by saying she cannot be culprit and judge at the same time. *distinct*: accented on the first syllable.

l. 63. *fire*: such a sound judgement has passed through repeated tests, just as refined gold and silver have passed repeatedly through fire.

ll. 64, 65. Therefore, it is implied, Arragon's judgement is not a sound judgement like this, but crude, untried, unsound.

ll. 66, 67. There are some who fondly look upon delusions as realities; the happiness they derive from doing so also turns out to be delusive. Such a delusion was Arragon's exaggerated self-esteem.

l. 68. *fools alive*: for instance Arragon; a living fool is here opposed to the portrait of a fool. *I wis*: certainly; a misspelling for M.E. *ywsi*, A.S. *gewis*, Germ. *gewiss*, all being adverbs with the prefixes *y-* and *ge-*.

l. 69. *Silver'd over*: grey-headed and having the appearance of being wise. *this*: this fool's head.

l. 70. This is contrary to one of the oaths taken by the

suitors; it may be that Portia's wisdom, and not that of her father's will, had imposed this condition, with the object of frightening undesirable people from taking the oaths: six had certainly declined to take them.

l. 72. *are sped*: either (1) are dismissed, or (2) have been successful (spoken ironically); perhaps with a sarcastic reference to speeding a parting guest: 'to speed' in Elizabethan English means 'to fare, to succeed well or ill', 'to succeed' itself having a neutral sense, 'to result'.

l. 73. *more*: greater (an adjective).

l. 76. *two*: namely his own and this picture.

l. 78. *wroth*: calamity, misfortune; this was the older meaning and is the third quarto spelling; the later spelling 'wrath' is adopted by some, together with the later meaning, anger (at his failure).

l. 80. *deliberate*: deliberating, who think themselves to be wise (referring to Arragon's long 'pause'). See note on l. 53.

l. 81. Ironical. They have just enough wisdom to make the wrong choice.

l. 83. The proverb means that it is destiny that causes a man to be hanged whether he deserves it or not, and destiny that causes a man to marry, the result being either happy or the reverse according to destiny. In this case Portia has been saved from two unsuitable husbands, and destiny may presently give her the man of her choice.

l. 85. *would*: wishes for. *my lord*: playfully addressing the servant in return for his addressing her as 'my lady'. Portia is in such high spirits at her two escapes that she can afford to crack a joke with a servant.

l. 87. *young Venetian*: perhaps Gratiano, acting as his friend's harbinger; the word 'Venetian' enables Portia to guess at once who the 'lord' is whose approach is here announced.

ll. 89, 90. *sensible regreets*: greetings very tangible and substantial, not consisting merely of words meant only for the ear ('courteous breath'). *commends*: commendations, salutations; the verb 'to commend' in the reflexive similarly was the usual word for sending salutations; see III. ii. 233.

l. 91. None of the other suitors are mentioned as having done what Bassanio here is said to have done, and by doing which he is already made to outshine emperors and princes in magnificence. *Yet*: as yet.

l. 92. *likely*: promising; if the ambassador is like this, what will the lord himself be like! There is no point in taking 'likely' to mean 'good-looking'; whereas the point in taking it to mean 'promising' is seen in the next three lines.

l. 94. *costly*: the obvious meaning, 'richly adorned', should be modified here into 'bringing rich gifts' (of nature, like sunshine, flowers, &c.).

l. 95. *fore-spurrer*: messenger arriving to announce his master's approach.

l. 96. It is clear from this affected indifference that Portia at l. 87 had guessed it was Bassanio that had been so announced.

l. 97. *some kin to thee*: this is very artfully said with the object of leading the servant on to name the lord without directly asking him to do so. In these earlier scenes in the first two acts Portia's character dawns upon us in its charming girlishness; in the third act it warms into the fervour of love confessed and the happiness of love returned and united; in the fourth, girl and wife both give way to the woman of commanding moral and intellectual strength, triumphantly employed in the offices of friendship for one in sore need of them, and in the fifth we are given a glimpse of her future wifely bearing.

l. 98. *high-day wit*: holiday wit which, no doubt, is more choice than common work-day wit, as holiday clothes are finer than work-day clothes.

l. 100. *post*: postman, in the sense of messenger; so 'message' once meant messenger. *mannerly*: (an adverb) becomingly.

l. 101. *Bassanio*: may it be Bassanio. *lord Love*: Cupid, in the vocative. *if . . . be*: if it be thy (Cupid's) will that it is Bassanio that comes.

ACT III

SCENE I

ll. 1–71. The late vague rumour of the loss of a Venetian ship has now taken definite shape as a rumour that the ship was Antonio's, and nothing has been heard since to contradict it. There is a strange mixture of flippancy

and of seemingly real concern in the tone of the two summer friends of the great merchant, whose misfortune is now all but certain, that contrasts with their unmixed and genuine pity when that misfortune was still only a possibility. Whatever the explanation of this might be, they both display unmixed exultation at Shylock's two misfortunes: the loss of property he has suffered through his daughter's flight, and the further loss he is likely to suffer through Antonio's impending bankruptcy. They had shaken their heads and said Antonio would be made to pay for the first of these losses, and now Shylock threatens to make him pay for the second. What! will he exact the penalty if he cannot get back the money? they ask; whereupon follows Shylock's fiendish exposition of the devil's Gospel of Revenge: the exaction of the pound of flesh will be sweeter to him than the repayment of more than the debt. This gospel, the Jew says, the Christians have taught him.

ll. 71–127. Love of revenge is stronger in his breast than love of money; but where the motive for revenge is absent, love of money is as strong as ever. He has sent a 'detective' after his daughter to try and recover, not her, but the property she had taken with her: the fruitlessness of the errand throws him into the agonies of the bereaved miser: he hears further confirmation of Antonio's losses, and the news throws him into the ecstasies of a fiend of revenge. The see-saw between these two passions is not wholly comic, as his 'confused passion' had been to the street-boys, and while we smile with Tubal, who plays upon both, we are at the same time overclouded with forebodings that mischief will be their outcome.

l. 1. *Rialto*: see note on I. iii. 19.

l. 2. *it . . . unchecked*: the rumour survives uncontradicted.

l. 4. *narrow seas*: see II. viii. 28. *I think*: by this fine touch we are reminded that it is a Venetian who speaks from hearsay about so distant a place as these Goodwin sands, in or near the English Channel.

l. 6. *tall*: fine, strongly built. *buried*: engulfed in the quicksands. *as they say*: as I hear; we must suppose these Venetians were familiar with the news of ships going to pieces on rocks, but not with that of their being swallowed up slowly in quicksands.

l. 7. *gossip Report*: rumour that says many things,

true and false; 'gossip' originally meant a sponsor at the baptism of a child, literally, a parent in God or in the spirit, as distinguished from the parents in the flesh ('god' and 'sib', kin, relation); next, from the merry-makings on such occasions, gossip came to mean a crony, especially one much given to talk: 'report' implies knowledge by hearsay, the speaker never having seen a wreck on a quicksand. *honest . . . word*: woman honest of her word; 'of' means in, with respect to.

l. 8. *in that*: in this story she told you about quicksands, &c.

l. 9. *knapped ginger*: bit off short and chewed pieces of ginger (as a tonic or stomachic).

ll. 11–14. There is an unpleasant ring of insincerity in this prolixity, indicating that he feels much less than he professes; at bottom he is glad at the calamity fallen on one whom he envied for his superior wealth, but he wishes to make a show of being sorry. *to keep . . . company*: to tack on to his name.

l. 15. Come, put an end to your unending sentence. This one sees through the other's insincerity and cuts short his flowers of speech.

l. 16. *Ha! . . . thou*: he pretends surprise, at first, at the other's blunt interruption, and then comes to a full stop by speaking out the bare fact in bare language. *the end*: the 'full stop' (that you want me to come to).

l. 21. *cross my prayer*: interrupt me in the midst of the prayer in which I join you (by saying 'amen' to it).

l. 27. *tailor*: i.e. Lorenzo, who inspired her with the idea of flight.

l. 29. *fledged*: grown up, marriageable. *complexion*: disposition, nature; a term in the old physiology, denoting the varying proportions in which the 'four humours' were blended in the human system, and the resulting dominant temperament of mind.

l. 41. *Rhenish*: 'white' wine; i.e. a light-coloured wine, 'red' wine being deep-coloured.

l. 43. *match*: bargain.

l. 44. *a prodigal*: because he flings away good interest by lending money gratis.

l. 45. *used to*: the folio reads 'was used to': where we now say 'was wont' the older idiom was simply 'wont'. *smug*: smartly dressed; another offence in the eyes of the Jew in his shabby gaberdine.

l. 47. *let . . . bond*: for I mean to show him that I *am* a usurer.

l. 48. *Christian courtesy*: instead of in the strict way of business, and at a good rate of interest.

l. 53. *disgraced me*: been ungracious to me.

l. 54. *hindered me*: prevented me from gaining; i.e., by taking no interest himself, and so lowering the rate for those who lent on interest; see I. iii. 42, 43.

l. 58. *dimensions*: limbs, parts of the body; the word is also used in Shakespeare of the entire body itself. *affections, passions*: (1) the ordinary distinction would of course make the affections to be the good, and the passions the bad emotions; (2) but in IV. i. 50, 51, there is an older distinction made; see note.

ll. 61, 2. *warmed . . . summer*: this reversed order of nouns and verbs with which they are connected is the figure of speech called *chiasmus*.

l. 66. *in that*: in taking revenge.

l. 67. *humility*: either (1) the spirit of humbleness, a pre-eminent Christian virtue, and resembling the Jewish spirit of 'sufferance' (I. iii. 108), or (2) humanity, kindness, of which meaning of the word there are other instances in Shakespeare. Either meaning is ironical, as is that of 'sufferance', l. 68.

l. 71. *better the instruction*: improve upon, surpass my instructor: my revenge will be more signal than any that a Christian can take.

l. 76. *matched*: paired with, found to match the two. This is a very unjust remark; a man who can play with so much humour upon a vindictive miser's feelings cannot himself be vindictive or a miser; but it was the way with Christians to think all Jews to be alike, as it was with Jews to think all Christians to be alike.

l. 78. *found*: this search after the runaway is a device to allow time to elapse so as to make the bond fall due.

l. 82. *cost*: which cost. *The curse*: (1) as it is a Jew who says this, it should be a curse whose justice his race bowed to and whose fulfilment it awaited with fear; if so, it must be a curse in their holy book—the Old Testament—and, most likely, one of the many fearful curses denounced on Israel by Jeremiah. The difficulty here is that none of these curses had become part and parcel of literature, so that Shakespeare was unlikely to refer to them. Hence (2) we are obliged to see here a reference

to a curse that had become famous in literature; this was the curse said by Christians to have been launched upon the Jews for their murder of Christ, namely, *the curse of the dispersion of their race* and of the extinction of their nationality. The difficulty here is that the curse is put into the mouth of a Jew; for Jews were not likely to quote as true what Christians had spread abroad. On the whole (2) is the better explanation. Now Shakespeare makes Shylock give an entirely new interpretation to this curse, quite in keeping with his character: 'the curse was *not* the curse of the dispersion that history says fell upon my race long ago, but *the curse of losing money*, such as has now fallen on me,' says the heterodox Shylock!

l. 84. *in that*: (lost) in the diamond.

ll. 85–7. If the dead body of his daughter in its coffin were only within his reach, he would have torn the jewels from her ear, and taken the ducats out of her coffin. *hearsed*: lying in her coffin.

l. 88. *Why, so*: well, I see it is so. Tubal had silently shaken his head by way of answer. The folios put a mark of interrogation after 'so', which gives a very feeble reading. *I know not . . . search*: I don't know what your bill will come to: 'I know not what's spent' amounts to 'I fear no end of money has been spent'. *thou—loss*: other, and less expressive readings are 'then' and 'there' instead of 'thou'.

ll. 91–2. This is spoken at the very time that we know that ill luck *has* lighted on other shoulders than his; and is meant to show the all-absorbing, self-centred selfishness of the speaker.

l. 102. *wrack*: wreck.

l. 108. *at a sitting*: in one and the same company. Thus is Shylock's hard-earned money being spent by his daughter in fashionable gambling and on expensive pets (l. 116). It is the very aggravation of his misfortune.

l. 116. Monkeys, parrots, negro-boys, &c., were in high fashion once in Europe, and cost a great deal. Jessica having escaped from the hell of her father's house is now having her full fling in a paradise after her own ideas.

ll. 118–19. These lines again are brought forward, by those who try to whiten his character, as a proof of Shylock's love as a husband, as II. v. 15 has been, of his affection as a father; and with as little truth, for, in the first place, we are told here that the youthful Shylock,

in his courting days, *received* a valuable love-token; are we told anywhere that he *gave* the lady anything in return? Moreover, he remembers his late wife, it is true, but in what other connexion than that of the bestower of a valuable on him does he remember her? This may be a 'little idyll', as Hazlitt, I think, called it, in Shylock's past life, but its hues are tinged, not with the roseate colours of love, but with the yellow gleam of gold. Some critics say the extraordinary value, beyond the market value of such gems, that he sets upon *this* gem is due, not to its being a token of love, but to the magic properties that gems given as love-tokens were supposed to possess.

l. 123. *me*: I beg of you, let me ask you. *officer*: constable; 'catchpole' as then called, 'policeman' as now.

l. 124. *the heart of him*: diabolically emphatic for 'his heart': 'of' here does not mean 'from', as some understand it.

l. 125. *merchandise*: business profits (in the way of usury, in which Antonio now undersells him).

SCENE II

ll. 1–62. Maidenly reserve passes into boldness of language strange in a young girl, in Portia's urging of delay upon Bassanio before he should make the hazardous choice upon which hangs the happiness of both. She asks him to delay a day or two, a month or two; she says it is not love that prompts her to ask this of him—all this shows a bashfulness that we expect. But when she proceeds to say that his eyes have divided her in two, that half is his, that the whole is his, and yet *not* his, and sends fortune 'to hell' for bringing it about, she fairly takes away our breath, and makes us ask ourselves whether this is a reserved maiden who is speaking. But there are good reasons; Portia's courting of Bassanio still further relieves him from the charge of being a fortune-hunter, for it is fortune that hunts him; and it is the first indication of the *lead* that her superior intellect is destined to give to the inferior mental powers of her future husband. Lastly, she displays a sublime sense of duty in refraining from telling Bassanio in which casket success lies, her obedience to a dead father being the master of her love for a living suitor. It is for such reasons that she is portrayed as somewhat more bold than is to be expected in a young girl.

l. 1. *a day or two*: she draws this out a few moments later (l. 9) to a month or two, during which she might have his company, if she is to lose him in the end.

l. 2. *in choosing*: if you choose.

l. 4. *something*: supply 'which'.

l. 6. *Hate*: if it is neither love nor hate, then what is it? *quality*: manner; namely, asking you to delay.

l. 7. Lest you may misunderstand me, if I do *not* give tongue to my thoughts.

l. 8. *no . . . thought*: she means to say 'a maiden has much thought but no tongue', i. e. a maiden may feel much love, but gives, or should give, no expression to it.

ll. 10, 11. Of course the two previous wrong choices have shown where the right choice lies; but we have seen indications that she knew this from the very first. *I am*: I am sure to be, I surely shall be.

l. 12. *So*: forsworn. *so*: if I never will be forsworn.

l. 14. *Beshrew*: Elizabethan etiquette called this a 'mild' or 'little' oath, and allowed ladies to use it.

l. 15. *o'erlook'd*: subdued by their look, bewitched; the fascination of the 'basilisk-eye' is referred to.

l. 16. The fourth foot is | thĕ ŏthĕr |, a trochee.

l. 18. *naughty*: wicked (here, unjust); so in III. iii. 9.

l. 19. *owners*: for instance, Bassanio. *their rights*: for instance, his right to the possession of Portia as wife. She has said above that she is his. A prosaic interpretation is to take 'owner' to mean Portia and 'rights' to mean the right to dispose of herself and her property.

l. 20. Scan thus: Ănd sŏ | thoŭgh yoŭrs, | nŏt yó | ŭrs. Próve | it só; the second 'yours' is a disyllable. *yours*: by right of love. *not yours*: by chance of lottery. *Prove it so*: if it prove so; that I am, and yet am not, yours.

l. 21. *fortune go to hell*: the chance of the casket-lottery be to blame. *not I*: I cannot be to blame for not being your wife, since I wish to be yours.

l. 22. *peise the time*: weight the time, handicap it, so as to make it move more slowly.

l. 24. The fourth foot is | -tiŏn Lét |.

l. 27. *treason*: one means for extracting confession of treason used to be the torture of the rack.

l. 29. *fear th' enjoying*: fear that I may not enjoy; 'fear' means fear for.

l. 30. *amity and life*: hendiadys for 'amicable life', amicable existence.

l. 32. Critics point out that when Shakespeare wrote his plays the rack was actually in operation in the dungeons of the Tower of London.

l. 35. '*Confess*' *and* '*love*', &c.: i. e. 'I confess that I love,' would have summed up all I have to say.

l. 44. *swan-like end*: the swan, that in its lifetime has no voice except a discordant hiss, was supposed to sing sweetly once just before its death.

l. 45. Scan thus: | Fáding | in mú | sic: that the | compá | risón. The first foot is a trochee. *Fading*: dying, vanishing in death. *that the comparison*, &c.: to complete the metaphor.

l. 48. *what . . . then*: what new simile or metaphor must then stand for music?

l. 49. *flourish*: notes sounded by trumpets at a coronation.

ll. 51–3. It used to be the custom once to play music under a bridegroom's window early on the morning of the wedding.

l. 54. *presence*: dignified bearing.

ll. 55–7. Hercules rescued Hesione, daughter of Laomedon, king of Troy, from the sea-monster to which she had been exposed, in return for a promise of some famous horses owned by the king, and not through any love for the lady. *howling*: namely, through grief. *sea-monster*: stands in the metaphor here for marriage with a suitor whom Portia could not love. *I . . . sacrifice*: I occupy the position of Hesione in the metaphor.

ll. 58, 59. *The rest aloof*: Nerissa and others of the household are meant, as they stand apart in the room, all in tears of apprehension lest Bassanio should choose the wrong casket. *Dardanian*: Trojan.

l. 61. *Live thou*: if you live, i. e. if you succeed; so in l. 44, failure was compared to death.

l. 62. *the fray*: namely, against adverse chance, which is likely to consign Portia to another, who, in the comparison, stands for the sea-monster.

ll. 63–186. The song is evidently designed to be a warning to Bassanio not to judge by the eye or by appearances. He is quick to take the hint, and forthwith descants upon the successful deception practised by outward shows upon the world: in law, the corrupt plea, eloquently pleaded, wins; in religion, the corrupt doctrine, gravely preached,

finds acceptance; among men, a bullying exterior, concealing a coward's heart, may pass muster for courage; among women, the artificial beauty of paint and false hair may effect conquests due rightly to true beauty alone. Then comes the application of all this moralizing: gold is externally beautiful, and therefore may conceal inward corruption; hence he rejects it. Next, he summarily rejects silver, on the ground that it is a mere medium of exchange. And, last, he chooses lead for the same reason that led another suitor to reject it; namely, because it threatens rather than promises. Portia's joy at the selection finds expression in short agitated, breathless sentences: Bassanio's, in silly doting over her portrait. Then follows the impressive scene in which Portia passes from the girl into the woman; from the maiden in love into the maiden about to be a wife. At this turning-point of life, with a seriousness she had never displayed before, she sets forth her willing acceptance of the precept of her religion that enjoins the subjection of the wife to the husband; and, in return for the all that her husband had hazarded for her sake—namely his love—bestows upon him the all that is hers,—herself and her wealth. To the clear-cut thoughts of this speech, Bassanio replies in one in which there is nothing clear, except the fact of his undying love. It is this one fact, however, that more than counterbalances his intellectual inferiority to her, and makes him her superior in her eyes, her equal in ours.

l. 63. *fancy*: love springing from mere external attractions; the word has this meaning in the current English expression 'to take a fancy to'.

ll. 63–6 are sung by one voice, ll. 67–71 by another, in reply.

l. 64. *Or . . . or*: whether . . . or. *in the heart . . . head*: does the head perceive beauty of mind and character, underlying the beauty of person that the eye perceives, and does the heart send forth its love to what the head perceives?

ll. 67–9. Passing love, born at the mere sight of its object, lasts only as long as the object continues before the sight, and dies as soon as the object is withdrawn from sight; i.e. this eye-begotten love, this 'love at first sight', is very short-lived. *the cradle*: i.e. the eye is both the cradle and the grave of love of this kind, which dies, as it were, in its infancy.

ll. 71, 72. This is not a very mournful or dignified dirge, but the departed in this case deserves nothing better.

l. 73. *So*: in the same way as the song indicates.

l. 74. *still*: continually. *ornament*: a fair exterior; so in l. 97.

ll. 76, 77. *But obscures*: that does not obscure. *season'd . . . voice*: made to appear just through eloquent pleading; the 'voice' of the advocate is the salt or spices that disguise the taint of a corrupt plea. *obscures . . . evil*: prevents the inward corruption from showing itself.

l. 78. *error*: heresy, heterodox doctrine. *sober brow*: religious preacher seemingly virtuous and pious.

l. 79. *approve*: justify. *text*: taken from orthodox scriptures.

l. 81. *simple*: naked, plain (some explain this as silly, simple-minded, but vice can hardly be so characterized).

l. 82. *his*: its; this was the usual neuter in M.E., and it survived down to Elizabethan times.

l. 84. *stairs of sand*: ascending steps of sand better show the insecurity of the footing afforded than a level surface of sand would. Butler's 'twisting ropes out of sand' indicates something similar.

l. 85. *beards*: this, the plural of the *collective* singular, is used because of the plural 'cowards' above, and because of the two proper names following.

l. 86. *livers . . . milk*: other expressions in Shakespeare to indicate cowardice are 'white-livered', 'lily-livered' 'milk-livered', meaning either 'white' blood (in the fanciful physiology of those days) or a state of bloodlessness.

l. 87. *valour's excrement*: beards indicating valour; 'excrement' is used in its literal Latin sense of 'outgrowth'.

l. 88. *redoubted*: feared; 'doubt' in Elizabethan English often meant 'fear'. *beauty*: artificial beauty, false show of beauty.

l. 89. *purchas'd . . . weight*: i.e. false hair sold by the pound.

l. 91. *lightest*: most frivolous (in character).

l. 92. *crisped . . . locks*: hair curled by the hair-dresser's art.

ll. 94–5. *supposed fairness*: unreal beauty of face due to painting. The two lines simply refer to a painted face surmounted by a head of dyed hair. *often known to be, &c.*: i.e. the false hair is often that which formerly

belonged to another head altogether, which is now in the grave. *dowry*: either (1) inaccurately used for 'legacy', or (2) property: the word applying to *woman's* property generally.

l. 96. *in*: being in.

l. 97. *guiled*: either (1) guiling, beguiling; the use of the passive participle in *-ed* as equivalent in meaning to the active in *-ing* is a common enough idiom in Elizabethan English: or (2) guileful, deceptive; the *-ed* being equivalent to 'full of', 'filled with'.

l. 99. *Indian beauty*: Indian woman; either (1) the word 'beauty' is added to indicate the sex; from one context (ll. 88–96) such beauty must be real ugliness—a beautiful scarf hiding an ugly face: or (2) the word beauty indicates attractiveness, like that of the bayaderes or dancing women, that allures only to destroy; the context here being the 'dangerous sea' above and ll. 100, 101. Numerous emendations have been suggested, none of which are likely, and some wild.

l. 100. *cunning times*: crafty, dissembling people.

l. 102. Midas, king of Phrygia, asked and obtained a favour from the gods that everything he touched might be turned into gold: one result was that his very food was converted into gold in his mouth. *will*: wish for; a substantive verb.

l. 103. *pale*: (1) as it is the paleness of lead that leads him to choose it, there seems no reason why the paleness of silver should repel him; some, therefore, propose to read 'stale' instead: (2) others retain 'pale' here, and propose another reading in l. 106 (see note). *common drudge*: common medium of exchange or circulation. Shakespeare wrote this when silver was still the standard of the currency, and before gold became that standard. Bassanio dismisses silver in two lines for being that which he most needs for keeping up his extravagant habits—namely, for being *money*.

l. 106. *Thy plainness*: (1) because of 'pale' in l. 103, some read 'plainness' here as meaning the plain speaking of the open threat conveyed by the inscription, and as offering a direct opposition to the 'eloquence' of the other two inscriptions; (2) the Qq. and Ff. read 'paleness' and put the emphasis on 'Thy', which will serve to make the paleness of lead to be something different from that of silver; the former being 'dullness', the latter, 'whiteness.'

l. 109. *As*: such as. *doubtful*: full of fear. *rash-embrac'd despair*: despair into which I plunged myself, but which has now proved groundless. This despair is an excuse for her forwardness in the latter part of the opening speech of this scene.

l. 110. *green-ey'd*: seeing things in a morbid light, jaundiced. *jealousy*: lest any of the other suitors might snatch her away from him.

ll. 111–14. These short, rapid sentences indicate the quick, hurried breathing with which they are uttered.

l. 111. Scan thus: Ó lóve | bè mód'rate; | àlláy | thỳ éc | stácý. The rhythm in these four lines is quick, therefore it is impossible to take this line as a long Alexandrine, as some try to take it.

l. 112. *rain*: shower down on me: a tamer reading is 'rein' meaning curb. The second sentence explains the metaphor, whichever it is, contained in the first.

l. 114. Scan thus: Fòr feár | I súr | fèit! | Whát find | I hère? The third foot is an unaccented syllable, the fourth a spondee.

l. 115. *counterfeit*: likeness: mere imitation, without the current added notion of dishonest or illegal imitation, is here meant. *demi-god*: a god would create, a demi-god would half-create and half-imitate, a mere human painter would only imitate nature.

l. 116. *Hath . . . creation*: has not merely painted a picture but has almost created a living being, with moving eyes and speaking lips (l. 118).

ll. 117, 118. i.e. those eyes *seem* to move, as mine *actually* move: the actual motion of my eyes imparts a seeming motion to those of the portrait.

ll. 119, 120. *sugar*: a somewhat new word in English in those days that got into the language, no doubt, at the same time that the article was imported into the country. Being new, it was good enough to be used often in poetry: it would be a bold poet who would *nowadays* attempt to use it. *a bar*: speech: the opening between the lips in the act of speaking. *sweet friends*: the lips.

l. 123. *gnats*: supply 'are entrapped'.

l. 124. The fourth foot is | thèm háving |. *do*: paint

l. 125. *steal*: make blind with love.

l. 126. *unfurnish'd*: unprovided with its fellow eye;

so that we would have a portrait of a lovely *one-eyed* Portia! Other readings proposed are 'unfellowed' and 'unfinished'. *how far*: as far.

l. 127. *substance . . . praise*: my praise, however full of substance it may be.

ll. 126–9. This proportion may be put algebraically thus: as the original is to the picture, so is the picture to my praise of it. *shadow*: picture. *substance*: original.

l. 130. *continent*: list, inventory.

l. 131. *by the view*: by outward appearances.

l. 132. *Chance . . . true*: may you always have the same good fortune and make the same good choice as now.

l. 139. *gentle*: not threatening, like the inscription on the outside.

l. 140. *by note*: by direction; a metaphor from a finan cial word (a bill, a note of hand) which is carried on in l. 148. *to give*: namely, a kiss. *to receive*: namely, the lady.

l. 141. *prize*: contest, prize-fight (as it were).

l. 144. Scan thus: Gíddy | ìn spírit | stíll gáz | ìng ìn à doúbt: the first foot is a trochee, the third a spondee, the fourth a pyrrhic.

ll. 149–75. The modesty of her nature leads Portia to a degree of self-depreciation that would have been condemned as excessive and insincere, were it not that the revulsion of feeling from lively apprehension—'despair' she calls it—to happiness assured—'ecstasy' she calls it—makes her, in all grateful sincerity, look upon herself as 'a nothing', whose very nothingness was, but just now, in danger of being extinguished. This self-depreciation serves as a contrast to the excessive self-esteem of the two suitors that deservedly landed them in disappointment, and as a moral, when this girl—unschooled and inexperienced—teaches a lesson to one older and hardened in experience of the evil side of the world and its ways: lastly, it serves to exemplify what is both a Christian doctrine and a fact of universal human nature, the subjection of wife to husband. This exemplification is a most signal one, since the wife who here thus subjects herself to the husband is his superior in mental and moral gifts.

l. 152. *To wish*: so as to wish. *better*: better than I am.

l. 156. *That*: (1) with a comma after 'account', 'that'

is a conjunction, meaning 'so that'; (2) with a full stop after 'account', 'that' is a demonstrative pronoun, amounting to 'and that': (2) gives a strong adversative force to 'but' (l. 158), which (1) fails to do.

l. 157. *beauties*: the plural implies the various elements that constitute beauty. *livings*: means of living, possessions, wealth in various forms.

l. 159. *sum of nothing*: (1) sum that amounts to nothing; the 'nothing' here forms a striking contrast to the 'twenty', 'a thousand', and 'ten thousand' above, and is in keeping with the three *un-'s* of l. 160; but it fails to give the jingle with 'sum', that (2) another reading, 'sum of something,' gives; with this latter reading the meaning is: sum of something, she knows not what at first, but which on summing up turns out to be nothing or very little (as the three *un-'s* of l. 160 show). The 'something' she would wish to be is very much (ll. 152–5); the 'something' she actually is is very little. *to term*: supply 'it' as the objective, though the Elizabethan construction would look on 'which' as both the nominative to 'is' and the objective to 'to term'. *to term in gross*: to put it in general terms.

l. 160. *unpractised*: inexperienced: this is true of her, but not the other two words: there is excessive self-depreciation in them.

l. 161. Supply 'she is' before 'happy', and 'that' after 'this'.

l. 162. Either (1) 'learn' is a disyllable in scanning; so are 'fear', 'year', sometimes disyllables in Elizabethan English, or (2) take 'hap-' in 'happier' as making, with the pause preceding, the third foot, or (3) read 'happier then in this', the third foot, 'happi- |,' being a trochee, the construction being '*she* is happier', and 'then' meaning 'next'. With the reading in the text the construction is '*it* (the circumstance following) is happier'.

l. 163. Supply 'that' before 'she'. *bred so dull*: so dull by nature.

l. 164. *is*: is the fact or circumstance. Another reading is 'in', in which case the construction is '*she* is happiest in that', &c.

ll. 165, 166. It is amusing to see how the relation here laid down is reversed in the last act and scene, with, of course, the needful change in the gender of the nouns

and pronouns. *from*: by ('by an order as proceeding from' perhaps explains this use of 'from' here).

l. 168. *converted*: a disyllable, forming the second foot in scanning: sometimes written 'convert', when pronounced as it is here.

l. 171. *this same myself*: this same 'myself' (l. 170), over which I have just said I was queen, I now give to you to be king over: she looks upon *herself* as one of her possessions, like house and servants.

l. 175. *vantage*: ground of vantage, opportunity. *exclaim on*: cry out against, complain loudly against.

l. 177. *blood . . . veins*: emotion felt in the blood rushing through his veins and throbbing in his pulse.

l. 178. *powers*: organs of mind and body, and their activity.

l. 182. *every something*: undefinable feeling and sentiment that every person individually feels; the word shows the confused impression on the mind of each, and the confused utterance that each gives to it. *blent*: blended; the blending together of what each feels and utters.

l. 183. *wild of nothing*: a wilderness (i. e. wild confusion) of feeling and utterance that are meaningless, except that they are a feeling and an utterance of joy.

l. 184. *Express'd*: finding utterance in the inarticulate cry of joy. *not express'd*: inwardly felt, but finding no outward expression in words or articulate speech.

l. 186. *be bold to say*: say, confident of the certainty of what you say (for he will surely be dead).

ll. 187–220. Upon a scene of serious courtship follows a description of a light-hearted courtship, a courtship carried on in hot haste and described with a flippancy by one who cannot be serious in anything—not even when courting.

l. 188. *our*: the first personal pronoun points to the *personal interest* taken by the speaker, and the rest of the household, in the issue: the reading 'your' is tame, inasmuch as it misses this touch of affection of servants for mistress.

l. 191. *that . . . wish*: i.e. for yourselves.

l. 192. *wish . . . from me*: either (1) have a wish for yourselves different from what I wish you; so, in *Twelfth Night*, 'write from it, if you can': i.e. write differently: or (2) wish my joy for myself to be lessened, to be taken away from: i.e. I am sure you wish me all the joy that

I can wish for myself. This interpretation prepares us for the announcement that follows.

l. 194. *faith*: plighted faith, vows of love.

l. 196. *so*: if, provided that.

ll. 199, 200. What brisker language could express the briskness of this courtship? *maid*: as Gratiano was a gentleman, and on terms of social equality with Bassanio, it is natural to think that Nerissa was a 'lady companion' to Portia, rather than a maid-servant. *intermission*: (1) I loved by way of pastime; your love-making was the serious play, mine was the interlude between acts: (2) another reading is to put a colon after the second 'lov'd', and no stop after 'intermission', in which case this word means 'delay'. But Bassanio's love was of longer standing than that of his companion, and *did* delay.

l. 201. With the punctuation as in (2) above, the meaning is: you and I are both impatient of delay. This meaning gives a connexion of thought with what precedes. With the punctuation as in the text the meaning is: I owe my wife as much to you as to my own efforts. The construction is '*there* pertains no more', &c. There is no connexion of thought in bringing this statement in here, even if it is a fact.

l. 202. *stood upon*: depended upon.

l. 203. *falls*: falls out, happens.

l. 204. *sweat*: past tense. *again*: either (1) (an intensive) profusely, or (2) in consequence of making the effort to woo (literally, in return).

l. 205. *roof*. palate, roof of the mouth.

l. 209. *Achiev'd*: obtained, ended by winning; literally, to bring to a head.

l. 212. *faith*: a play on the word: (1) yes, I mean good faith; (2) in faith, by my faith.

l. 219. *infidel*: Jessica is left unnoticed for a long time (see l. 238); the simple reason is that she hangs back and shows reluctance to be noticed.

ll. 221–327. Immediately on the happiness born of the result of the last casket-scene, there follows, to cut it short, the news of the forfeiture of Antonio's bond. Portia's insistence to know the contents of the missive that had chased all its new-born happiness from Bassanio's face, calls forth from him a speech in which shine the strength and purity of his friendship. When he was lavishing money right and left at Belmont, what need was

there for him to inform any one where the money came from? And yet he had informed Portia herself that none of this money was his—it was all borrowed—and that the only wealth that was his was the gentle blood in his veins. When Portia offers to pay off the debt many times over if need be, the first-fruits of the fortune that had been won with the help of Antonio's security are offered to redeem that security; with this peace-offering in his hand, Bassanio sets out on the very day of his marriage, hastily performed, that no time might be lost.

l. 221. *Salanio*: this is an emendation on the quarto reading '*Salerio*', evidently a new personage. (1) This reading is defended on two grounds: one, that it is always so spelt in the quartos in this scene, so that it cannot be a printer's error for 'Salanio': the other, that Salerio is meant to be a slighter sketch of a friend of the character of Salanio and Salarino, the similarity of character being indicated by the similarity in the names, and the addition of this third friend being meant as an indication that Antonio has many such friends, but only one like Bassanio. (2) The emendation is defended on the ground that a third personage is superfluous, since it is enough that, while one of the two, Salarino, stays behind with Antonio at Venice, the other, Salanio, may well be employed to bring the news to Belmont.

ll. 222, 223. If my newly acquired rights here enable me to exercise them in welcoming you.

l. 224. *my very friends*: my true friends: 'very' originally meant 'true', like the French *vrai*, derived from the Latin, *verus*.

l. 230. *past . . . nay*: in a way quite beyond my power to refuse.

l. 232. He does not state his reason, and the help that Lorenzo actually gives in Scene iv cannot possibly be here meant: he *may* have meant that some of Shylock's own money, now in Lorenzo's hands (as he supposes), might be of use in paying off the debt due to him.

l. 233. *him*: himself: see note on II. ix. 90.

ll. 235, 236. He is well enough in body; if there is anything the matter, it is in respect of his mind. He is ill in mind if he takes his misfortune to heart; he is well in mind if he has the fortitude to rise above his misfortune. This seems to be the plain meaning of this purposely enigmatic language.

l. 237. *estate*: state, the situation he is in.

l. 238 Jessica's looks, as she hangs back in the room, have shown that she needs cheering up; her present dejection is the reaction that might have been expected from her late escapade.

l. 240. *royal merchant*: (1) originally, Venetian merchants, whom in the thirteenth century the Venetian government permitted to occupy islands in the Archipelago for commercial purposes and to exercise sovereign rights over them; (2) later, in the countries of Europe, merchants employed by kings as their agents received this title, whether so employed in their own or in foreign countries: in the latter capacity they were somewhat analogous to the consuls-general of present times; (3) merchant of princely magnificence. Antonio may have been a 'royal merchant' in any of these senses.

l. 242. Scan thus: Wé are | thè Ja | sòns, wè | hàve wón | thè fléece. Both words 'we' are emphatic: *we* from among the suitors. See notes on I. i. 9 and 170–2.

l. 243. The second foot is | ýou had wòn | and is a trochee: both 'you' and 'he' are emphatic. There is a double meaning: (1) the fortune you (plural, like 'we', to which it responds) have won will not help him. But if the fortune that *he* has lost had not gone to the bottom of the sea, but had been forfeited to *you*, instead of being forfeited, as it actually is, to Shylock—that *would* have helped him. (Salanio is made to speak here with 'Sophoclean' irony, ignorant that this fortune Bassanio has won in his clever wife will be of help.) (2) There is a play on 'fleece' and 'fleets': I wish the ships he has lost had been lost not at sea, but to you.

l. 244. *shrewd*: bad, evil: originally accursed, next bad, next cunning, and lastly acute, clever; from the noun 'shrew', the shrew-mouse, once thought to be venomous.

l. 247. *constitution*: frame of mind.

l. 248. *constant*: firm-minded.

l. 250. I must unreservedly share with you the knowledge and the pain of the bad news. *freely*: without reserve, so in l. 255. Scan thus: Ànd Í | mùst frée | lỳ hàve | the hàlf | òf ánything. This loss in *length* that 'anything' suffers is made up by the emphasis of *accent*.

l. 251. Scan thus: Thàt this | sàme pá | pèr brings yòu. | Ó swèet | Pórtià: the fourth and fifth feet are trochees.

l. 257. *then*: so far: this meaning is needed because of the 'then' in l. 260, which again must be taken to mean 'next', 'at the same time'.

l. 260. *state*: estate, property, fortune.

l. 262. *engag'd myself*: incurred an obligation, incurred a debt (of honour, in this case).

l. 263. *mere enemy*: one absolutely his enemy; 'mere' is pure, unqualified, from the Latin *merum*, wine unmixed with water.

l. 264. The third foot, | hére is | , is best taken as a spondee, the emphasis on both words serving to give the meaning—'here is an *extraordinary* letter': the extraordinary character being set forth in the next two lines.

l. 267. *issuing*: pouring forth: this transitive is the causal form of the intransitive.

l. 268. *hit*: succeeded; supply 'has'.

ll. 269, 270. *Mexico . . . India*: see note on I. iii. 19, 20.

l. 271. This wholesale wreck of *all* the ships of a single merchant in all parts of the ocean is dramatic, but almost impossible in reality. *touch*: this single word shows how stout-built ships are mere egg-shells when they strike on rocks.

ll. 272–84. This speech bears the stamp of sincere sympathy, and shows that friends of the kind to which the speaker belongs are capable of good feelings that, on occasions of adversity like this, overmaster the envy that they are not free from during the prosperity of its object. The aim here is to make Shylock stand *alone* as the one bad man and arch villain in the play, without a second and minor villain to bear him company.

l. 273. *it should appear*: it appears, but who would have thought so? this seems to be the force of the 'should' here—what appears is what one did not expect.

l. 274. *present*: ready to be paid down at once. *discharge*: pay off; we now speak of discharging, not a creditor, but a debt to a creditor.

l. 277. *confound*: destroy; this is a common meaning of the word in Elizabethan English: e.g. 'let me not be confounded' in the Prayer Book. It still survives in a line in the National Anthem and as an imprecation.

l. 279. *impeach*: call in question, accuse (the duke) with violating. *freedom . . . state*: free rights conferred by the state on her citizens: here, particularly, the right

to enforce contracts in a court of justice, conferred on all her citizens alike, whether Jews or Christians.

l. 281. *magnificoes*: grandees: this, the old Italian-English dictionaries say, was a title given to the Venetian nobility; 'illustrissimo' is still a title in use in Portugal.

l. 282. *port*: importance. *persuaded with*: tried persuasion with, entreated.

l. 283. *envious*: malicious; 'envy' often means hatred in Elizabethan English. *plea*: demand in a court of justice.

ll. 285–91. All Venice *and his own daughter* bear testimony against Shylock! The 'merry sport' has gradually ceased to be merry, and now looks like terribly earnest business. The aristocracy of Venice and the duke himself are down on their knees before him, but Shylock is inexorable: now comes his own daughter to say that he had determined to be inexorable long ago, before she left his house. What then becomes of the plea of some critics that he was only joking when he took the bond, and only seriously resolved on enforcing it after his daughter's flight?

l. 285. She never calls him 'father', only 'him' and 'he' in aversion.

l. 286. *his*: the same cold aversion is shown by this third personal pronoun; she will not say 'our'. But in this case there is the other reason that she has, presumably by this time, turned Christian.

l. 290. *deny*: refuse; these two words were often interchangeable in Elizabethan English.

l. 294. *best-condition'd*: sweetest tempered, kindliest disposed. *unwearied*: most unwearied, the superlative, by an economy of grammar, being here understood from the preceding 'best'.

l. 297. *any*: in any.

ll. 300, 301. This numerical climax shows her readiness to pay *any* amount needed; it reaches to twenty times in l. 308. *deface*: cancel, obliterate.

l. 302. *description*: four syllables in scanning.

l. 303. *hair*: two syllables, because emphatic: there are many similar instances in Shakespeare and the Elizabethans. *thorough*: pronounced as a monosyllable.

l. 304. *church*: to a Christian she uses the right word, though to a heathen—Morocco—she had used the word 'temple'.

l. 308. *twenty times over*: it is unlikely that Portia had

not been listening to Salanio and Jessica when they said that nothing would move Shylock; when she offers the very amount that one of them had said he would not accept, it looks as if she *had* been listening, but did not quite believe what she had heard. As a woman of wealth she knows the great power of money, and means to *try* it; her mistake is that she does not as yet know the power of the hatred in Shylock's breast.

l. 313. It is evident that Bassanio had forgotten to greet his visitors and was altogether quite dejected. *cheer*: countenance, expression of face.

l. 314. *dear bought*: (1) won at the cost of much anguish (she was *twice* very near losing him), (2) won at the cost of this calamity to your dear friend (it was for her sake that the loan had been incurred for which Antonio was now in trouble). Both meanings well apply here.

l. 316. *Sweet*: this very first word of the letter shows how unchanged Antonio's feelings towards Bassanio remained, in spite of what had happened.

l. 317. *estate . . . low*: under this general statement Antonio conceals from his friend the painful fact that he is in prison.

l. 318. *forfeit*: forfeited; 'forfeit', 'contract', and other words ending in 't' are more correct forms of the past participle than they are with '-ed' added; because the 't' in such cases is the true Latin participial ending, and the '-ed' is really a superfluous addition.

ll. 319–20. *all debts . . . death*: Antonio means that his friend's presence at the hour of death will so comfort and fortify him that all the obligations under which he has placed Bassanio by his kindness will be cancelled by this last act of friendship. *love*: friendship: so 'lover' in III. iv. 7, means friend.

l. 320. *between you and I*: 'I' is used ungrammatically for 'me' for the sake of the euphony that is secured by making a vowel follow a consonant.

l. 323. *O love*: she takes up the word from the letter.

l. 325. *again*: back.

Scene III

Antonio's present humble attitude before Shylock serves a twofold purpose of dramatic justice: it is just retribution for his treatment of the Jew in the days of his

prosperity, and it is one of the incidents that, step by step, leave the Jew without the shadow of an excuse for his unrelenting behaviour. In pursuing this conduct, Shylock, like all men of narrow mind, is dominated by a fixed idea: this Christian lent out money gratis, therefore I will have my bond of him. Finding entreaty fruitless, Antonio recovers his calm resignation to his fate, with the one wish to see the payment of the debt of friendship that is due to him.

l. 1. *look to him*: see that he does not escape from you (now that you have brought him from prison into the streets).

l. 3. Antonio had begged of the jailer (l. 10) to bring him out into the streets, so that he might have a chance of meeting Shylock and of entreating him, as he here does, to relent.

l. 8. *shall*: will be compelled by me to.

l. 9. *naughty*: wicked: cf. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, iv. ii. 14, 'A thing of naught.' *fond*: foolish; originally the past participle of the M.E. verb 'to fon': hence the derived meaning, foolishly loving, doting.

l. 10. *To come*: as to come.

l. 14. *dull-eyed*: either (1) not keen enough to penetrate into your object, or (2) sad-looking.

l. 15. *shake . . . relent*: at first to refuse and then to relent and grant: Shylock's mind is a mind that, once made up, is made up for ever.

l. 19. *kept*: (a tacit reflexive) dwelt, lived: there are many instances in Elizabethan English of this use of 'keep' and 'keep with', and the term is still used by the undergraduates of Cambridge in this sense.

ll. 22–3. These good deeds poetic justice rewards when their doer is himself delivered from forfeiture of his bond. Almost every personage in the play is an antithesis to Shylock in one or other of the evil traits in his character: that trait in which Antonio stands as an antithesis is open-handed generosity opposed to grasping avarice.

l. 25. *grant . . . to hold*: allow . . . to hold good, be valid.

l. 26. *deny . . . law*: refuse to let the law take its course.

ll. 27–9. There are different readings. (1) Reading and punctuating as in the text the nominative in apposition is the clause 'the commodity-if-it-be-denied,' the emendation ''twill' (it will) having been made in order to suit this construction. (2) Punctuating as in the text, but, with the quartos and folios, reading 'will', which in this case has for its nominative the single word 'commodity';

but as this gives a meaning obviously not intended, the clause 'the commodity if it be denied' has been taken to amount to 'the denial of the commodity', so that the virtual nominative of 'will' is 'denial', giving the meaning required. (3) Putting a comma after 'law', and a colon after 'Venice', and reading ''twill'; in this case 'it' has for its antecedent 'course', so that the verbs 'deny' (l. 26) and 'be denied' (l. 28) both refer to the same noun, whereas under (1) and (2) they refer to two different nouns, 'course' and 'commodity'. (4) Leaving out l. 27, 'for . . . have' altogether, and putting no stop after 'law'; this again, as in (3), makes the two verbs refer to one and the same noun. Under (1) and (2) 'for' is a conjunction, meaning because, under (3) it is a preposition, meaning *either* (*a*) because of, *or* (*b*) as for, concerning. Under (1) and (2) and (3) (*b*) 'commodity' means convenience, privilege, i.e. that called 'freedom of the state' in III. ii. 279; under (3) (*a*) 'commodity' means trade, commerce. Under all three 'impeach' has the same meaning as in III. ii. 279. The objection to (1) and (2) alike is the forced method of getting at a nominative: that to (3) is the tameness—un-Elizabethan but quite Augustan—of diction, which is the price of symmetry and correctness. The objection to (3) (*a*) is that this meaning of 'commodity' occurs nowhere else in Shakespeare, and is only an inferred meaning from one that sometimes occurs, namely, goods, merchandise; that to (4) is that it is merely a heroic method of cutting the Gordian knot. The general meaning is that the duke cannot refuse to allow the law to take its course; for if he does refuse, and so withdraws the commercial privileges that aliens enjoy in Venice, then his action will cause the justice of the Venetian government to be called in question.

l. 30. *trade and profit . . . consisteth*: profitable trade consists; there being a *hendiadys* in the two nouns, the verb is in the singular.

l. 31. *go*: perhaps addressed to the jailer, and not to Salarino; if so, it means 'come, take me back to prison', as in l. 35.

l. 32. *bated*: a shortened form of 'abated', in its literal sense of beaten down, i.e. (here) weakened in body.

ll. 35, 36. With these words his mind seeks refuge in thoughts of friendship, that will heal the wounds caused by enmity.

SCENE IV

True love easily understands the nature of true friendship to be akin to its own, and the character of a true friend to be akin to that of a true lover: hence Portia likes to think that Antonio must needs be like Bassanio in mind and in person, and that serving Antonio must needs be like serving Bassanio himself. To render this service, she leaves Lorenzo and Jessica in charge of her house, without, however, confiding to them her secret, which she only confides at present in part to Nerissa, by telling her merely that they must both disguise themselves as men and set out on a journey. A messenger is dispatched to Padua to Bellario, learned in the law, in furtherance of the plan.

l. 1. Though I speak this in your hearing, I do not mean to flatter you.

l. 2. *conceit*: conception, idea.

l. 3. *god-like amity*: such as exists between your husband and his friend. 'Amity' is a disyllable in scanning.

l. 4. In allowing your husband to leave you on the day of your marriage, in order that he might see his friend,—in order that this 'god-like amity' may have free play.

l. 5. If you knew the character of the friend, as you know the character of his friendship with your husband.

l. 6. *How true*: supply 'to' before.

l. 7. *lover*: see note on III. ii. 320. Ben Jonson signed his letters to Donne sometimes thus, 'your true lover.'

l. 9. *customary*: your usual, such as you would show to any one. *bounty*: goodness; the usual French meaning of the word. *enforce you*: supply 'to be' after.

l. 10. *doing good*: this is the trait of character common to Portia and Antonio, and this is the bond between them already formed before they have personally met. This trait has for its antithesis the doing of evil, so prominent in Shylock.

l. 11. *Nor . . . not*: the double negative is emphatic.

l. 12. *converse*: associate together. *waste the time*: spend time in enjoyment, not in work.

l. 13. *equal . . . love*: souls returning love for love.

l. 14. *proportion*: four syllables in scanning. *like proportion*: similarity in form.

l. 15. *lineaments*: features, person; the word is used,

in an old work, of King Arthur's bones and dead body. *manners*: the outward expression of the spirit. *spirit*: mind.

l. 19. i.e. I would not consider any cost incurred for such a purpose to be too much. *little*: trifling in her own eyes, though it may be very great in reality.

l. 20. *semblance of my soul*: Antonio is meant, but in either of two ways: (1) Antonio who resembles ('semblance') Bassanio ('my soul'); (2) Antonio, whose soul resembles mine (Portia's) in this, that both take a pleasure in 'doing good' (l. 10).

l. 25. *husbandry and manage*: care and management: 'husband' originally meant dweller in a house, master of the house.

l. 28. *contemplation*: five syllables in scanning, '-tion' being disyllabic.

l. 30. *husband*: possessive case, the 's of 'lord's' belonging, by a piece of grammatical economy, to *both* nouns.

l. 31. *monastery*: properly, for monks, here used for a convent for nuns.

l. 33. Not to refuse this office I impose on you. *imposition*: five syllables.

l. 34. *The which*: see note on I iii. 5. *some necessity*: double meaning: (1) (ostensibly) the necessity of living in retirement during her husband's absence; (2) (secretly) the necessity of being away from home in order to carry out her plan.

l. 36. *fair commands*: your commands, which, I am sure, will be nothing but proper and honourable.

l. 42. *all heart's content*: either (1) all happiness of heart, or (2) all your heart's desire. Both meanings are found in other passages in Shakespeare.

l. 46. *ever*: always in the past, as 'still' (l. 47) means always in future. *thee*: addressed to an inferior; a change from 'you' (l. 44), addressed to those whom she treats as equals. *honest-true*: in Elizabethan English two adjectives qualifying the same noun were sometimes hyphened together as if one qualified the other.

l. 49. *Padua*: the university there was a great seat for the study of civil law. The Qq. and Ff. read 'Mantua'.

l. 50. *cousin's*: kinsman's; any relation by blood (Lat. *consanguineus*) was so called, e.g. a nephew or a grandchild.

l. 51. *notes*: letters; i. e. instructions for conducting the case.

l. 52. *imagin'd*: (1) imaginable; Elizabethan use of -ed for -able: (2) with the speed of imagination: this hyperbolical interpretation is out of place in a speech giving directions to a servant on business.

l. 53. *traject*: ferry, place for crossing a river; Italian *traghetto*, French *trajet*; the Qq. and Ff. read 'tranect', the -*gh*- and -*j*- above being changed here in English into -*n*- and a -*c*- being added, owing to a fancied connexion with the word 'connect'. *common ferry*: public ferry-boat; that 'ferry' does *not* mean here the place of crossing, is shown by the next line.

l. 54. *trades to*: carries traffic to; this shows that the vessel, not the place, is meant by 'ferry' above.

l. 55. *get . . . gone*: make haste and go; the expression does not imply contempt or anger here, as it does commonly, e.g. in IV. i. 396.

l. 56. *convenient*: suiting the urgency of the occasion.

l. 59. *think of us*: think of seeing us. *shall . . . us*: 'shall' is the emphatic word here and expresses Nerissa's surprise at Portia's announcement; | shàll thèy |, the fourth foot, is a trochee accordingly.

ll. 63 sq. Portia's description of the swaggering figure she will cut is not very different from Rosalind's in *As You Like It*, when she too talks of disguising herself as a youth.

l. 65. *braver*: finer; this very common meaning of the adjective in Elizabethan English is also seen in the noun 'bravery', meaning finery.

l. 66. The cracked, 'reedy' tone is meant, when the voice breaks at this age. It will be seen afterwards that Portia's *natural* voice was somewhat harsh and 'mannish'.

l. 69. *quaint*: ingenious, clever in devising variations on the same theme.

l. 72. *I . . . withal*: I could not help it; numerous passages are quoted by critics in confirmation of this meaning, from Elizabethan writers.

l. 73. *for all that*: although I could not help refusing them my love.

l. 74. *puny*: petty; the French spelling, *puisne*, shows the literal meaning, later born, later created, and, as applied to judges, means inferior, junior, as opposed to a chief justice.

ll. 75, 76. i.e. People will say I must have left school a year at least to have had such adventures.

l. 77. *raw*: green, artless. *Jacks*: foolish fellows.

l. 82. *coach*: Shakespeare, very likely, is thinking here more of the London of his days than of the Venice of the days of Portia. Early in the seventeenth century coaches were common enough in London—Ophelia in *Hamlet* calls for her coach—but in Venice, with its canals for its main 'streets', one would not expect to find coaches. The coach in the text, however, is one at Belmont, about to run to Venice.

l. 84. *twenty miles*: if the Belmont of the play is the Dolo of geography, then this distance from Belmont to Venice is correct enough. Some take this to be the journey there *and back*; others take 'twenty' as a mere indefinite number, as in l. 74.

Scene V

We have lately seen what a serious, moral turn Launcelot had taken: we here see what a serious, religious turn he takes in his anxiety about the salvation of Jessica's soul. His theology, like his casuistry, sinks lamentably into bathos. His conscience, on a previous occasion, hung about the neck of his heart in vain: here, his religious fears fairly lay him by the heels; for in Jessica's conversion to Christianity he only sees a dismal prospect of a rise in the price of pork! His sympathy for the wife, his old friend in the Jew's house, does not conquer his aversion to her husband, his temporary master, against whom he rebels in a most refractory fashion. The wife expresses the same unbounded admiration of Portia here that the husband had in a previous scene, but, like a true woman, adds that she is the one to keep her husband straight, and that he is lucky indeed in having her for wife to do so; whereupon Lorenzo indulges in a little badinage to the effect that as Portia is a paragon of a wife to Bassanio, so is he a nonpareil of a husband to Jessica.

l. 3. *I promise you*: I assure you, let me tell you. *fear you*: fear for you.

l. 4. *agitation*: he means cogitation—what he thinks of the matter.

ll. 5, 6. What good cheer can she feel on being assured that she is damned! *damned*: Launcelot gives expression to the serious belief among Christians in those days that

there was no salvation for the souls of Jews and pagans. This is the charitable reason why Shylock is forced to turn Christian. iv. i. 386.

ll. 14, 15. *Scylla* was the name of a rock, and *Charybdis* that of a whirlpool, on opposite sides of the straits of Messina. The expression is proverbial of falling into one danger in trying to avoid another.

l. 17. This is spoken in reply to Launcelot's conclusion that she is sure to go to hell through the sin of her father and mother both being Jews. Jessica has, no doubt, had quoted to her by her husband 1 Cor. vii. 14, 'The unbelieving wife is sanctified by her husband.'

ll. 19–24. Now that Jessica has proved from canonical text that her salvation is assured, Launcelot's late fear about it is replaced by a fear for a hitherto unforeseen consequence of it: the more Christians there are, the higher will the price of pork rise.

l. 21. *one by another*: side by side.

ll. 25–63. Jessica after marriage has the same friendly, indulgent feelings for the 'merry devil' that cheered her loneliness before it: but her husband cannot stand his harmless foolery. Lorenzo is short and snappish with Launcelot, and Launcelot returns his temper with interest: the result is a cordial aversion between the two.

l. 30. *are out*: have fallen out, have quarrelled.

l. 42. *best . . . silence*: wit will be most charming when it remains silent.

l. 44. *parrots*: i.e. fools, like Launcelot, who talk much without understanding what they talk. *prepare for dinner*: Lorenzo means 'make preparations for serving up dinner', but Launcelot wilfully misunderstands it to mean 'prepare *themselves* for dinner by getting up an appetite'.

l. 48. *wit-snapper*: quick at making what he thinks to be witty retorts.

l. 49. Lorenzo omits the unlucky word 'for', but is again snapped up.

l. 50. Dinner is ready, only the table has to be laid out.

l. 52. Lorenzo means 'will you lay the table-cloth?' Launcelot misunderstands it to mean 'will you put on your hat?'

l. 53. *my duty*. which is to stand bareheaded before my superior. This is, of course, ironical, for Launcelot does *not* do his duty, though he knows it, when he thus

stands obstinately stock-still before his temporary master, instead of rightly understanding and obeying his orders.

l. 54. *quarrelling with occasion*: either (1) fencing with the matter in question, eluding the point, or (2) provokingly misunderstanding me at every opportunity.

ll. 60–3. At last he *seems* to obey orders, but shows the wealth of his wit in still misunderstanding them. *for your coming in*: perverse to the last, he inverts the words 'table' and 'meat' and pretends that Lorenzo had wished him to *bid*, i.e. order, them to come in to dinner, and respectfully declines to carry out that part of his instructions, but leaves Lorenzo to come in or not as he pleases.

l. 64. *dear*: (ironically) precious *discretion*: i.e. want of discretion or discrimination; confusion. *suited*: either (1) ill-suited to the meaning they are meant to convey, or (2) dressed out 'tricksily' (l. 68).

l. 65. Another reading is to put commas after 'hath' and 'memory', making 'planted' a passive participle instead of an active transitive.

l. 67. *A many*: we now say 'many a' with a singular noun, but still say 'a few' with a plural; in both cases 'many' and 'few' amount to a collective noun singular, with the plural noun following in apposition, to explain what the collection consists of.

l. 68. *for a tricksy word*: for the sake of a word that plays tricks with its own meaning; a word that seems to say one thing while it really means another. So far, this sense would be conveyed as well by the word 'tricky'; and the use of 'tricksy', instead, is meant to imply a metaphor, namely, of a word tricked out or dressed out fantastically, as opposed to a *plain* word.

l. 69. *defy the matter*: treat the subject-matter, the plain meaning, with contempt. *cheer'st*: as this is the only instance of the intransitive use of this verb in Shakespeare, some propose to adopt a quarto reading, 'farest.'

l. 73. There would be no occasion to express this hope for the future if Bassanio's life in the past had been upright; but we know it probably had not been. This is yet another reason for marrying a spendthrift and a man of pleasure to a strong-minded and virtuous woman capable of controlling him.

ll. 76, 77. Various readings and interpretations: (1) The reading in the text is that of the first quarto: the antecedent of 'it' is 'to lead an upright life'. (2) The folios

read 'mean it, it Is reason', &c.: the antecedent of the first 'it' is as in (1), and the meaning is the same. (3) An emendation is 'do not merit it. In reason', &c.: the antecedent of 'it' is 'blessing', and the meaning is virtually the same as in (1) and (2), since he can merit the blessing only by leading an upright life. In every case there is a double meaning in 'come to heaven': (1) enjoy the blessings *of* the next world *in* the next world; (2) enjoy the blessings *of* the next world *in* this world, those 'blessings' in this latter case being centred in Portia as wife, as l. 82 makes clear.

l. 79. *lay*: should lay, were to stake; the word 'women' being the objective. But some take it as the nominative to 'lay', meaning were to lie, were to be wagered; but there is no other instance of the use of 'lie' in this sense.

l. 81. *Pawn'd*: staked, wagered.

l. 82. *her fellow*: Portia's equal.

l. 83. *of me*: in me; this obvious meaning is derived from one of the commoner meanings of 'of', namely, in virtue of.

l. 85. *anon*: he is not in a hurry to get *her* opinion.

l. 86. *while . . . stomach*: double meaning: (1) while I have the inclination, am in the humour; implying that she might soon change: (2) before, not after, dinner.

l. 88. *'mong other things*: amongst the other dishes on the table, this 'table-talk' being a dinner for the mind, as it were.

l. 89. *digest it*: though by itself (without the sauce supplied by the 'other things'), it may be *indigestible*: i.e. may be *dispraise* of me. *set you forth*: praise you; this is ironically, or at least ambiguously, meant: she *does* set him forth (i.e. dispraise him) in v. i. 18 sq.

ACT IV

Scene I

ll. 1–166. All efforts outside to make the Jew relent have failed, and the matter is come into court. In it the duke makes yet another effort. In conciliatory words he tells Shylock he is sure that he is not in earnest when he persists in saying he will exact the penalty, but that he means really not only to relent but to be generous, if only the law allows him his claim in full. Shylock's

answer is that his mind is made up: he will exact the penalty to the letter: he will give no reason—unless undying hatred for Antonio is a reason—for persisting in his resolve: the court dare not refuse: if it does, he will charge it with breaking the law—his oft-repeated threat. A short but sharp passage at arms with the indignant Bassanio is interrupted by Antonio, who with the calmness of resignation, begs his friends to cease from their fruitless intercession and to let the law take its course. 'What mercy do you hope to be shown to you, if you show none to another?' asks the exasperated duke, foreshadowing, without knowing it, what is about to follow. 'What mercy do I need, when I ask for justice and my right?' retorts Shylock: 'my right to the penalty—the pound of flesh—which I have bought with the forfeited loan, is as absolute as yours is to the slaves that you have bought with your money: let the court dare to refuse me my right, and I will charge it with breaking the law.' The duke, baffled in his efforts at conciliation, resorts to a threat that the strange law of procedure ruling in this court leaves open to him—he threatens to dissolve the court unless a 'consulting barrister', as perhaps we should nowadays call him, who has been sent for, puts in an appearance, which he has not yet done. At this moment a letter arrives from the learned counsel, which says that he is unable to come, but sends, as substitute, a rising young barrister, whom he has coached up in this case, and who, he is sure, will do full justice to it. During this incident, two by-plays have been going on: one, in which friendship tries in vain to cheer up the despondent spirits of the doomed man by professing readiness to pay the penalty for him; the other, in which triumphant hate sharpens the knife in open court to cut off the penalty from the defendant's own body.

l. 1. *what*: great men used to preface a question with this 'pronoun of impatience'.

l. 2. *Ready*: present.

l. 3. *answer*: meet, face in court.

l. 4. *stony*: stony-hearted.

l. 5. *empty from*: compare 'free from' for the preposition here used, instead of 'of'.

l. 6. *dram*: drop; small quantity (in solid or liquid measure).

l. 7. *Your Grace*: this English way of addressing a

duke is inaccurately applied here to the Venetian doge. *qualify*: moderate, soften.

l. 8. *obdurate*: accented on the second syllable; the line is hypersyllabic (-ate) in scanning.

l. 9. *that*: this conjunction was used to avoid the repetition of a preceding conjunction, here 'since'; it is a French idiom.

l. 10. *envy's*: of (his) hatred: so 'envious', in III. ii. 283.

l. 13. *The very tyranny*: the utmost cruelty. *his*: his spirit (from l. 12).

ll. 17 sq. The good duke utters all this with seeming confidence, but with secret misgivings; what in words he tells Shylock he is, is what he inwardly wishes him to be, but fears he is not: see ll. 3–6. *the world . . . too*: it is to be feared that here the wish is father to the thought.

l. 18. *lead'st . . . malice*: you keep up this show of malice.

l. 19. *last . . . act*: end of the action, termination of the proceedings: namely, when the court grants your claim in full.

l. 20. *remorse*: pity; a very common meaning in Elizabethan English. *strange*: unexpected (after this show of unrelenting malice).

l. 21. *strange-apparent*: seemingly, not really, strange.

l. 22. And instead of exacting the penalty, as you now insist on doing. *where*: whereas, amounting here to 'instead of'.

l. 24. *loose the forfeiture*: release the bond; the contrast being between the binding power of the bond and the loosening of it. Another reading is 'lose', give up, be willing to lose.

l. 26. *a moiety*: a portion, not necessarily half.

l. 28. *so huddled . . . back*: come so thick and fast on him.

l. 29. *royal merchant*: see note on III. ii. 240.

l. 30. *pluck*: extort; since such bosoms have to be forced to show pity.

ll. 31–3. There is a delicate insinuation here to the effect that Shylock's heart is a gentle (l. 34), not a flinty, heart, like those here referred to; but the blandishment falls on deaf ears. *offices*: acts.

l. 34. *a gentle answer*: such as must come from your gentle nature, so unlike the natures described in ll. 31–3.

l. 35. *possess'd*: informed, put in possession of the fact.

l. 37. *due and forfeit of*: forfeiture due for (by *hendiadys*).

l. 38. *deny*: refuse; this meaning occurs elsewhere in the play, and is common in Elizabethan English.

l. 39. Shakespeare uses language here that was applicable to English cities, but inapplicable to Venice; the former received charters and franchises from the King of England, which he could revoke at pleasure: Venice was an independent republic and not subject to the Holy Roman Emperor, as is here implied.

l. 43. *it*: the antecedent is 'that' (l. 42). This answer, as Bassanio says (l. 63), is 'no answer' of the nature expected by the duke (l. 34), but is prompted by malice that means to aggravate the pain that mere refusal will cause.

l. 46. *ban'd*: poisoned with rat's bane. *yet*: again.

l. 47. *love*: supply 'who'. *gaping pig*: either (1) a squealing or grunting pig (doing so with the mouth wide open), or (2) roast pig (with a lemon, say, inserted to keep its mouth open): this latter meaning is better, since it is pork, more than the living animal, that rouses most strongly a Jew's aversion.

l. 49. *sings . . . nose*: the nasal or reedy character of the notes of this instrument is meant.

l. 51. (1) The Qq. and Ff. put a full stop after 'affection' and read 'Masters of passion sways it', &c., the grammar of which is easily amended by reading *either* 'masters . . . sway . . . they like or loathe', *or* 'mistress . . . sways . . . it likes or loathes'. (2) An emendation proposed is to read 'masters *our* passion, sways it,' &c. (3) The best emendation proposed is that given in the text; with this reading, *affection* means a liking or loathing (l. 52) for which no clear reason can be given (l. 53): *passion* means the strong impulse to action springing from these likes and dislikes. For example, Shylock's dislike (or hate and loathing as he calls it in l. 60) of Antonio is his 'affection'; his resolution to exact the penalty is his 'passion'. *sways it*: sways the passion. *what it*: what the affection. *the mood . . . loathes*: the mood *in which* it likes or loathes a thing or person; i. e. if the affection likes or loathes, then the passion has a strong impulse to act in accordance with the liking or the loathing. *your answer*: the answer to you.

l. 53. As our likes and dislikes are instinctive and unaccountable.

ll. 54–6. *he . . . he . . . he*: one . . . a second . . . a third. The difficulty is whether these three lines indicate the 'affection' of antipathy, or the resultant 'passion'. They seem to imply nothing more than the former, while the context requires them to imply the latter; yet no *action* springing from the latter can be inferred until we come to ll. 61, 62. *wauling*: squealing. The Qq. and Ff. read '*woollen*', the wind-bag of the pipes being covered with woollen cloth; emendations like 'swollen', 'wooden', &c. are needless.

l. 58. *As to offend*: namely, by seeming wilfully to withhold his reason for these apparently capricious likes and dislikes, when in reality he has none. *being offended*: namely, by the thing that he cannot abide.

l. 60. *lodg'd hate*: hatred that has taken up house and home in my heart; settled hatred. *certain*: fixed, unalterable. The concentrated venom in this utterance is unmistakable. This hate and loathing are the 'affection' of antipathy, in Shylock's case.

ll. 61, 62. The action here indicated flows from the 'passion' roused in Shylock by the above 'affection'. *losing suit*: a suit in which, even when I win it, I lose heavily in money.

l. 64. *current of*: course taken by.

l. 65. *thee*: withering contempt for the person so addressed is meant.

l. 66. If a man hates a person he does not go the length of killing him.

l. 67. If a man does not kill, it is a proof that he does not hate what he spares: therefore, *if a man hates, he kills*—nothing less.

l. 68. Every offence taken does not amount at once to a deep, settled feeling of hate. *offence*: displeasure felt, offence, not given, but taken or felt.

l. 70. *think . . . with*: remember that you are talking with.

l. 71. *the beach*: a local reference to the Lido or the sea-front of the lagoons of Venice.

l. 72. *main flood*: the open Adriatic Sea.

l. 73. *use question*: try talk; see IV. i. 345.

l. 74. *the lamb*: that he has made a prey of.

l. 76. *no noise*: either (1) understand 'bid them' from 'forbid', l. 75, or (2) take '*forbid . . . no*' as containing a double—which in Elizabethan English amounted to an emphatic—negation.

l. 77. *fretted with*: agitated by.

l. 82. But in brief and plain procedure, such as befits the dignity of this court; this court should not waste its time and sacrifice its dignity in bargaining with the Jew for my life. *conveniency*: propriety, becomingness.

l. 83. *have*: have passed on me.

l. 87. *draw*: take, receive. We speak of drawing money from a bank.

l. 88. This prepares us for the appeal to Shylock's mercy that follows, and foreshadows what is to follow on its refusal by him.

l. 89. In his eyes there is here no question of mercy, but one of justice alone: none of moral wrongdoing but one of legal wrongdoing alone.

l. 92. *parts*: work, tasks.

ll. 94–7. *Let them . . . viands*: all this should be taken as if within inverted commas. *season'd*: gratified. *such*: of the same kind as yours, as delicate as yours.

l. 103. The irony of Fate, uttered through the unconscious lips of her victim.

l. 104. *Upon*: acting upon, by virtue of. This is not a common meaning.

l. 106. The duke must have sent for Bellario some days ago, therefore, so as to give him time to get up the case. On the other hand, Portia has sent to Bellario for written instructions *and a lawyer's robe*, showing that she too had been in communication with him before this, and had now resolved to appear as judge (or advocate) in Bellario's place. From this it need not follow that she knew of the duke's action before she began communicating with the learned doctor; it was merely a happy coincidence that the duke should send for the most eminent counsel within reach, and that Portia should consult that very person, because he happened to be her 'cousin'. In the course of this correspondence she learnt that the duke had sent for him, whereupon she arranged with him to go in his place. *to determine*: to decide; but in what capacity? Certainly not as mere advocate, but as 'judge', which his substitute is repeatedly called afterwards: but, then, if as judge, by what strange procedure is a temporary judge appointed to try a single case, instead of the case coming up before a permanent judge sitting in a permanent court?

l. 107. *stays*: waits.

ll. 111–13. Bassanio certainly shows that he has the *will* to lay down his life to save his friend's, but has he reflected whether he has the *power* to do so? Does he think that the creditor will accept the substitution? That he will *not*, is shown by his action and speech (ll. 121, 122), which are prompted, no doubt, by his overhearing Bassanio's speech.

l. 118. *still*: yet, after I am dead.

ll. 121, 122. What a contrast between the faint tones of the first line and the savage energy of the second: the one proceeding from foreboding alarm, the other from triumphant anticipation. *that bankrupt*: savage energy reaches its climax in these two words; bankruptcy, in Shylock's eyes, is the greatest of crimes, and the 'that' points to the greatest of criminals. *forfeiture*: is scanned as a disyllable: some propose to read 'forfeit'. The many *t*'s and *th*'s and the *c* and *kr* all help the ferocious utterance of the line.

l. 123. *on thy soul*: double meaning: (1) upon the whetstone of your soul of flint; (2) at the peril of your soul and its salvation.

l. 125. *hangman*: public executioner (whatever the manner of the death he inflicts: always so used in Shakespeare).

l. 126. *envy*: hatred. Scan thus: Of thý | shàrp énvy. | (pause) | Can nó | prăyers piérce | thée. The third foot is made up by the pause, and the line is hypersyllabic.

l. 127. Another scathing remark by which Gratiano is called a witless fool.

l. 128. *inexecrable*: past execrating, that cannot be execrated enough: 'invaluable' is analogous in meaning. The later folios read 'inexorable', but the reading in the text is more forcible—'be thou damned that cannot be damned enough'.

l. 129. *for thy life*: for allowing you to live.

l. 130. *my faith*: my Christian faith.

l. 131. *Pythagoras*: a Greek philosopher of the sixth century B.C., who taught the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, according to which the souls of human beings passed at death into the bodies of different beasts successively, before passing back into the bodies of other human beings at their birth, thus completing a cycle.

l. 133. *currish*: wolfish, malicious. *spirit*: (a monosyllable) soul.

l. 134. *Govern'd*: dwelt in and swayed the actions of. *who . . . slaughter*: the construction is defective, as 'who' is left without a verb—'who, being hanged . . . his soul did fleet'. Some remedy the defect outwardly by taking 'who'—a nominative *pendens*—to be equivalent to 'and he'—a nominative absolute. [It is likely that Shakespeare got this strange incident from books of travel, in which a 'law' or custom is described as prevailing in some countries, by which wolves that had taken human life were (if caught) tried, condemned, and hanged as criminals. I have read of this custom.]

l. 135. *fell*: cruel (the derivative noun 'felon' had originally a similar meaning). *fleet*: make haste to fly.

l. 138. *starv'd*: hungry.

l. 140. *offend'st*: hurt; this original sense is seen in 'offensive', striking at an enemy, as opposed to 'defensive', warding off such a stroke.

l. 142. *cureless*: past cure, too late for repair, incurable. Shylock deigned to answer Bassanio word for word: Gratiano he treats as beneath contempt.

l. 143. This by-play above has gone on during the reading of the letter by the duke.

l. 148. *conduct*: escort, guidance into court.

l. 150. *at*: at the time of (in current English 'at' would mean because of, owing to, but it does not here)

The laboured language used here seems to have been the 'epistolary style' in Elizabethan times; it is also used often in Shakespeare when messages are delivered, verbally, or narratives are given. Here in this letter, no doubt, profound respect was meant by such a style, as it still is meant in parts of the East.

l. 152. *in loving visitation*: on a friendly visit.

l. 153. *doctor*: doctor of law.

ll. 152–6. All this about the visit and consulting law books together cannot be true, as is indicated in III iv. 45–55. The whole plan was, no doubt, got up between Bellario and Portia: but why she resolved to plead the case, instead of leaving it to Bellario, and how and when she discovered her own ability to plead, are inexplicable except on the dramatic ground that the wife, whose husband had got his friend into trouble for her sake, should be the most befitting person to deliver him out of it.

ll. 157–9. *which . . . comes with him*: this is laboured language for 'with which he comes'. *bettered*: improved; this is a bit of conventional modesty. *at my importunity*: because I begged of him hard to take up the case; this, again, cannot be true, for it was Portia who must have begged this of him. *fill up*: fulfil, satisfy.

l. 160. *be . . . lack*: be no impediment to his receiving.

l. 162. *young . . . head*: this is meant to guard beforehand against any prejudice that the extremely youthful appearance of the 'doctor' might give rise to.

l. 163. *whose*: the antecedent is 'him'.

ll. 167–303. The proceedings in court consist of two parts: the first, a plea for mercy (which occupies these lines); the second, the application of the letter of the law for the dispensation of justice, after the appeal to mercy has failed. The former was a plea for the urging of which the woman's heart in Portia would better qualify her than any other advocate: the latter, though it may be nothing better than a 'legal quibble', as a Lord Chancellor of England called it, is justice entirely after Shylock's own conception of justice, and therefore fittest to be dealt out to him. The court opens; to the very first question from it, the defendant replies by confessing to the bond. Then the court declares that there is nothing left but for the plaintiff to show mercy, and proceeds to define what mercy is. Mercy is a purely voluntary action, unlike justice, that has the compelling force of the law behind it; mercy shines brightest in those who prefer, of their own free heart, to show it at the very time when the law gives them absolute power to enforce justice; mercy, enthroned in his heart, more befits a king than the power he wields by his strong right arm; temporal power is the attribute of earthly kings, but mercy is the attribute of God, the King of kings, and earthly kings approach nearest in attribute to their divine King when they temper justice with mercy: none can escape—not even he that has the right to call for justice against another—if justice is not so tempered. All pray for mercy to Him whose attribute it is, for all need it; he who needs God's mercy to be shown to him, should show human mercy to one who needs it from him. This appeal to Shylock's mercy fails; he calls for the enforcement of the law, of justice, of the penalty. An appeal, next, to his avarice,

fails also, for vengeance is stronger in him than avarice. An appeal to the court to do a 'great right' in equity, by overriding the great wrong involved in the letter of the law, also apparently fails. The defendant, sick of a suspense that makes life a burden, calls for judgement according to the law; the judge pronounces it, and then makes a last appeal to the plaintiff: let him exact his penalty, for the law awards it to him, but let him try to save the defendant's life by having a surgeon in attendance, for the law does *not* award the life with the penalty; will he not show mercy here, where it does not stand in the way of full justice to his claim? The answer is 'No': for no such act of mercy is stipulated for in the bond. With this answer the Jew fills up to the full the measure of his iniquity, and from this moment the judge leaves him to his fate. He turns to the defendant and asks him if he has anything to say before judgement is pronounced. Yes, he has: it is to say that his affection forgives everything to his friend, if there is anything to forgive; only he asks for some assurance that his affection is returned. That assurance is fervently given; judgement is formally passed, and its execution on the spot is ordered.

ll. 167-8. *Came . . . I did.* The quarto reading is 'come . . . I did': but as this reading makes Portia's grammar to be very bad, though her legal knowledge has been vouched for as being very good, the folios changed the reading to what it is in the text. *take your place*: it is quite clear from what follows that this place is that of judge; if so, plaintiff and defendant are not represented by counsel, neither do they plead their cause personally, but the case has been submitted to the judge *out of court*, and he has already come to a judgement on it, when he takes his seat on the bench. Such is the strange procedure in this court. It is idle to inquire whether this was something like the procedure in Venetian courts of justice, either in Shakespeare's or in mediaeval times; or to bring forward in support, as has been done, a similar course of procedure in a Nicaraguan court of justice in the nineteenth century. It is enough that this procedure is best fitted for the dramatic purpose in view in this scene.

ll. 169, 170. You know the contention that brings this legal point into court?

l. 171. *throughly*: thoroughly: conversely, 'through', the

preposition, was spelt 'thorough' in Elizabethan English, when emphasis was meant. It seems from this that the case had been submitted to Bellario 'in chambers', as perhaps we should now say, and by him gone through with Portia, in order to put her in possession of both the facts and the law of the case.

l. 176. *in such rule*: so perfectly in order, so perfectly in accordance with law.

l. 177. *impugn*: oppose. *as . . . proceed*: in the course of procedure you have adopted.

l. 178. *within his danger*: within his power to exact the penalty: an old French legal term. A particular meaning was to be in debt to, but this meaning cannot apply here, as the answer shows.

l. 179. Antonio's answers here and in the next line are given with careless unconcern.

l. 180. *Then . . . merciful*: for justice decides the case against you.

l. 181. What law, what authority, can compel me to show mercy?

l. 182. *quality*: attribute, virtue. *is not strained*: is not shown on compulsion: i.e. no power of law or of man can compel any one to show mercy. How spontaneously is this fine speech on mercy made to arise from the unmerciful man's question, and is thus divested of all resemblance to a set didactic performance.

l. 183. This simile occurs in the Apocrypha. Ecclus. xxxv. 20. *It droppeth*: mercy shows itself of its own accord, as the rain falls and the wind blows as they list: one cannot command mercy, any more than one can 'make' rain or 'raise' the wind.

l. 184. *it is twice bless'd*: it is blest itself, inasmuch as it blesses others; it confers happiness on itself in conferring happiness on others. The next line shows that this is the specific meaning, so that 'twice' here (like 'thrice' very often) does not merely mean very, supremely.

l. 186. Mercy is strongest in those who have the greatest power: for example, you, Shylock, can show the greatest mercy to Antonio, because you have the power of life and death over him.

l. 187. *his crown*: emblematic of his supreme power.

l. 188. *his sceptre*: emblematic of the strong arm that wields that power; as opposed to his 'heart' (l. 192) where mercy sits. *temporal power*: as opposed to the

divine power which, too, he may wield (ll. 194 sq.). *to*: this is a more correct preposition than 'of', as it repeats the meaning of the prefix *at-* (Latin, *ad*).

l. 189. *awe and majesty*: awe-inspiring majesty (by *hendiadys*).

l. 194. *show*: show itself, appear.

l. 195. *seasons*: tempers; in the metaphor, mercy is the salt that keeps justice sweet—prevents justice from rotting.

l. 198. *Should see*: could claim to see, would have a right to see.

ll. 198–200. We all pray to God for mercy, not for justice: therefore, we should show mercy to our fellow men, in return for the mercy that we pray to God to show to us. *render*: show in return.

l. 201. To lessen the severity that the granting of your legal claim, in bare justice, will involve; since, if granted, it will lead to a cruel act.

l. 202. *strict*: that can only dispense justice, but cannot show mercy.

l. 204. *my deeds . . . head*: another unconscious prophecy.

l. 206. *money*: money due, debt.

ll. 208–10. Bassanio has twice the sum in cash with him, which he offers to pay down: if this is not accepted, he offers to stand security to the extent of ten times the sum. In l. 232 Portia asks Shylock to accept thrice the sum, in cash presumably. We need not trouble about the arithmetic of this.

l. 210. This, of course, means on forfeit of his own life; but with the addition that his life may be taken *piecemeal* in the way indicated.

l. 212. *malice . . . truth*: either (1) his malice is too strong to allow any feeling of common honesty he has to have free play, or (2) the malicious man oppresses the honest man (abstract for concrete).

l. 213. Break the law by your authority, and arbitrarily put an interpretation on it that it could not otherwise bear.

l. 214. To do a great act according to the spirit of true justice, do what is a trifling wrong according to the letter of the law.

l. 215. *of*: from carrying out.

ll. 216–220. The repetition of the opening words at the close clenches the statement made between with such judicial calmness. *Can*: supply 'that' before. *error*:

deviation from, irregularity in, the prescribed course of the law.

l. 221. *A Daniel*: a judge, young but wise, like Daniel. The prophet Daniel, when quite young, is said to have exposed the falsity of a charge brought by certain elders against a young virgin, Susanna. The story forms the subject of a book in the Apocrypha.

l. 224. Shylock, who had all this time jealously clutched the bond in his hand, here eagerly offers it to Portia, whose utterances, seemingly all in his favour, had disarmed his habitual suspicion.

l. 226. *in heaven*: recorded in heaven, sworn before God.

l. 228. *forfeit*: see note on III. ii. 318.

l. 232. *bid . . . bond*: Portia makes a motion, as if about to carry out her words, which has the effect of bringing Shylock's heart into his mouth. Gratiano's words and action following, also supply a comic element that relieves the harrowing suspense of this scene.

l. 233. *When*: tear it when. *tenour*: purport expressed in the bond.

l. 234. *It doth appear*: the tone of these words shows that Shylock's ardent confidence in the judge has cooled down. The whole of this speech is pervaded by a tone of uneasiness and suspicion.

l. 240. *stay*: rely, take my stand.

l. 241. Antonio feels the slow torture of the trial to be unendurable.

l. 244. All Shylock's enthusiastic confidence in the judge is restored.

l. 246. The penalty is wholly in accordance with the purport of the law: neither opposed to it nor beyond it. *hath*: singular, because the two nominatives mean one and the same thing.

l. 249. *more elder*: a double comparative, for the sake of emphasis. *elder*: older.

l. 253. *are there balance*: in Elizabethan English singular nouns ending in an *-s* sound were sometimes treated as plurals in form: 'balance' here is treated as if it was a plural, spelt 'balans'; so is 'voice' elsewhere, as if it was a plural, 'vois.'

l. 254. *The flesh . . . ready*: the place of the second and third feet that are wanting is taken up *by the pause*, during which Shylock produces the balance from under his

gaberdine; the fifth and last foot is hypersyllabic—thèm réad | ȳ.

l. 256. There is sly humour in the words 'on your charge', i. e. at your expense. Portia here gives the Jew a last chance by this last appeal to his mercy. His answer throws away that chance; after affecting to read over the bond again, he says he finds no *legal* obligation imposed on him to do what he is asked to do; therefore, he *will not* do it. He has got ready the knife and the balance, but he will not provide a doctor. Hereupon she turns from him, and the next time she turns to him, it is to award him what his conduct had brought down upon his head.

l. 267. *still her use*: always her way.

l. 269. Either (1) to see the *approach* of old age and poverty (in which case 'hollow . . . brow' are the effects of grief at this prospect), or (2) to see oneself actually suffer from old age and poverty (in which case 'hollow . . . brow' are the effects of old age).

l. 270. Scan thus: An áge | òf povèr | tȳ; from | which línger | ìng pén | ànce: 'poverty' is a disyllable, as 'poorty', its shortened form, would be, if that noun existed; the full form of 'poor', the adjective, is 'pover', French, *pauvre*.

l. 271. This is the folio reading, in which case 'misery' is a disyllable: the quarto reading is 'Of such misery', in which case 'miséry' is a trisyllable, accented on the second, as in Latin and French.

l. 273. *process*: the detailed series of acts; the particulars of the manner (of his death).

l. 274. *speak . . . death*: speak kindly of me after my death. Surely, a very modest wish from a benefactor who had risked and was giving his life. The dramatic object is again to contrast selfishness with unselfishness.

l. 276. *a love*: an object of love, a friend; another reading is 'lover': see note on III. iv. 17.

ll. 277, 278. *Repent not . . . And he*: this is the folio reading: the meaning is, let not regret for the loss of a friend mar your happiness in the wife you have won. The quarto reading is, *Repent but . . . And he*: the meaning is, if only you regret losing me—if only your happiness in a wife does not make you quite forget your loss of a friend—then your friend does not regret that he dies for you. *pays your debt*: namely, with his life.

l. 280. *with all my heart*: a pathetic double meaning: (1) most willingly; (2) with my heart's blood.

l. 282. *which*: who; so in v. i. 210, 'a civil doctor, which did', &c.

ll. 287 sq. Little bits of comedy again to relieve the strain of the impending tragedy. Gratiano gracefully follows suit, but with a difference. Bassanio offers to die himself. Gratiano wishes that, not he himself, but his wife might die.

l. 294. Shylock expresses his contempt for Christian husbands, because they are so ready to sacrifice their wives on the altar of friendship. Perhaps this is meant to show that he never had felt, nor was capable of feeling, the power of true friendship. In scanning, 'husbands' and 'daughter' are slurred over and count only as monosyllables.

ll. 295, 296. *Barabbas*: the Jewish robber whose life was offered to the Jews by the governor of Judaea, if only they would spare the life of Christ. The point seems to be this: a *robber* son-in-law (as by heredity he was likely to be) would be particularly objectionable to a *miser* father-in-law! By implication, Shylock looks upon Lorenzo, the *Christian* robber son-in-law, as even worse.

l. 297. *pursue sentence*: proceed to pronounce sentence.

l. 299. The order of the two sentences here is a rhetorical inversion: the proper logical order is given in l. 302. Portia henceforth assumes the cold, hard tones of a judge who means to judge only *by the law*, and has dropped all thoughts of mercy both from the Jew and towards him.

ll. 304–456. The triumphant Shylock is about to execute the sentence of the court, when a thunderbolt falls upon his head in the shape of the 'legal quibble'; he must not shed a drop of blood or cut off more or less than exactly a pound of flesh; for none of these is *in the bond*. If he does, the penalty, *by the law*, is death and confiscation of all property. The discomfited Jew asks to be paid thrice the principal that had just been offered—asks even to be repaid his bare principal: neither can be done now, *by the law*, is the court's reply. Having thus dispensed that justice *by the law* for which he had called aloud, the court now refers Shylock to the duke, of whom he is to beg, on his knees, for that mercy to be shown towards him that he had refused himself to show to another, and that the court, *by the law*, refuses to show to him. The duke,

exercises his royal prerogative of mercy readily: he grants him back his forfeited life and mitigates the sentence of confiscation of his property. He is put to the last humiliation when the court readily gets his intended victim himself also to show mercy, which consists in this, that he is to turn Christian (how this is mercy, will be seen below), and is to bequeath all his property to his daughter and her husband, on which condition its confiscation is not to take effect. During this scene of Shylock's humiliation, the comic element is supplied by the same volatile character who had supplied it during that of his exaltation, and who now administers the last kick to Shylock's already dead contumacy, as he shuffles, utterly broken down, out of court. The atmosphere being thus cleared of the poison of his presence, there follow compliments from the duke, from every one, to the learned judge, who, however, will accept no tokens of gratitude, except trifles—one being a *ring* on Bassanio's finger. The ring is refused, and after some awkward excuses, the real reason of the refusal is reluctantly explained; the judge pretends not to believe, and leaves in apparent high dudgeon. Then gratitude for a friend's life saved gets the better of a promise to a wife, and the ring is sent in haste after the judge, and delivered to him; whereby hangs a tale.

ll. 304 sq. The whole court, except *one* person in it, experiences a sense of relief, and a revulsion from despair to joy too deep to find expression from any except the volatile Gratiano.

l. 310. *confiscate*: the -*t* here is itself the past participial suffix: see note on III. ii. 318. On the stage, about here, Shylock nervelessly drops the knife and the balance from his hands.

l. 312. Gratiano jumps up and shouts this at the Jew.

l. 313. Shylock utters this in tones of blank amazement. *act*: statute, law.

l. 317. *this offer*: the offer made a short while ago. An emendation reads 'his offer'—the offer made by this man (pointing to Bassanio, whose offer of twice the amount had been raised by Portia to thrice the amount, which larger sum, of course, Shylock grabs at).

l. 326. *a just pound*: an exact pound.

ll. 327-30. Several readings and meanings: (1) with a comma after 'substance' (as in the text) meaning,

in the gross, by a substantial amount, as opposed to 'division . . . hair', which means by a small amount, whether a fraction of one-twentieth of a scruple or a single hair's weight; this meaning of 'substance' makes the 'but' of l. 326 meaningless, for it is meaningless to say '*only* heavy or light by a *large* amount'; (2) with no comma after 'substance', meaning, in the whole of one-twentieth of a scruple, or in a fraction of one-twentieth of a scruple; this gives the very forced meaning of 'whole' to 'substance', and makes a pointless distinction between that whole and its fraction, for both are small quantities; (3) read either '*as* the division' or '*by* the division'; the meaning of 'in the substance' in either case is 'in weight'.

l. 333. Retribution falls upon the Jew when Gratiano mockingly repeats not only the words he had heard him use in court, in a moment of triumph, but, by a kind of happy inspiration, flings back at his head an expression he had used against Antonio (in I. iii. 44) which nobody had heard him utter aloud.

l. 334. Some critics take this pause to mean 'hesitation', and try to make out that Shylock, at the end of this pause, might have converted the play into a tragedy, by taking Antonio's life at the sacrifice of his own. Shylock's very next words should have shown that his thoughts were not bent upon the lofty tragedy of killing and being killed, but upon the business-like subject of getting what money he could, as matters had now turned out for him.

l. 343. *so*: as explained in ll. 306 sq.

l. 345. *question*: idle talk (here); talk (commonly in Elizabethan English). Shylock turns abruptly to leave the court.

l. 351. *contrive*: plot; this bad sense of the word is often met with in Shakespeare.

l. 352. *seize*: this is a legal term here; take possession of.

l. 353. *privy coffer*: the private treasury.

l. 354. *in the mercy . . . duke*: for the duke to show mercy to (in the exercise of this sovereign prerogative: the common expression '*at* the mercy of' would not imply this *legal* power).

l. 356. *predicament*: position. This was a Latin term in logic, corresponding to the Greek 'category' (as in Aristotle); from Portia's lips it is meant to have a legal flavour.

l. 361. *danger*: risk of a penalty: see note, IV. i. 178. *formerly*: previously, herebefore; another legal word. *rehears'd*: stated on the authority of the law; recited.

l. 365. *left*: left to thee; a participial adjective qualifying 'value'.

l. 368. The duke shows mercy before he is asked—a contrast to Shylock, who refused to show it though repeatedly asked.

l. 369. *For*: as for.

l. 370. *general state*: the public estate; i. e. (here) the treasury.

l. 371. Which may be reduced to a fine (of less than that half of your wealth), if you humbly ask for mercy from the duke.

l. 372. Yes, the fine will be allowed in the case of that half, but the other half must go intact to Antonio. *for*: in the case of.

l. 373. *pardon not that*: remit not the penalty of my life.

l. 377. *render*: either (1) show towards; or (2) return (used ironically—show in return for the *mercy* he has shown you).

l. 379. *so please*: if it so please.

l. 380. *quit*: remit, give up.

l. 382. *in use*: various meanings have been given: (1) in trust; Antonio offers to hold in trust for Lorenzo that other half that the law gave him in absolute ownership. When property was conveyed by *A* to *C*, the transfer to take effect on *A*'s death, it had to be held by a third party, *B*, in trust till *A*'s death: this trust-tenure was said to be one 'in use'; (2) at interest; Antonio was to hold that half as a loan on which he would pay interest to Shylock, at whose death he was to hand over that half to Lorenzo; (3) in usufruct: Antonio was to enjoy the use of that half, *without* paying any interest, during Shylock's lifetime. Whatever the exact arrangement proposed may be, one fact is common to all three interpretations: namely, this other half of the property is *not* to be entrusted into Shylock's hands. *render*: return.

l. 386. *presently*: at once: so in l. 403. *become a Christian*: this certainly looks like vindictiveness, but in the Middle Ages conversion of the heathen to Christianity, even by force, was looked upon as an act of charity, necessary for the salvation of the souls of those so converted. Antonio here, in all seriousness, shows the

same concern for the Jew's soul as Launcelot had, in his comic way, shown for Jessica's; he renders this charity in return for the Jew's hate that had sought to take his life.

l. 387. *record*: draw up in writing and file.

l. 388. *possess'd*: possessed of.

l. 390. *recant*: recall, withdraw.

l. 393. *I am content*: I agree ('content' is used in the House of Lords for 'aye').

l. 396. *Get thee gone*: there is certainly contempt implied in these words here, which Shylock deserved. He had a short while ago contemptuously turned his back on the court and was about to leave it without the court's permission: therefore he has here been made to ask the court's leave to go.

l. 397. Male children at baptism have two male sponsors, who are expected to see to the spiritual and religious education of their godsons during childhood.

l. 398. *ten more*: in order to make up the twelve constituting a jury.

ll. 304–99. The process of Shylock's humiliation has been a gradual one, since the climax of his exultation in l. 303. Amazement at the sudden turn of the law that has baulked him of his blood-thirsty revenge; disappointment of his hopes of getting back his money after the hope of revenge has been snatched away; insolent defiance, when, yet unbroken, he turns his back on the court, as if it has nothing more to do with him, nor he with it; recalcitrance, when the court tells him it has not yet done with him, but that he must humiliate himself before he leaves; then, at last, the utter breakdown, when he is told the consequence if he still refuses—these are the steps by which Shylock descends from the heights to the depths, when we see him for the last time, before the door of the court closes upon him.

l. 401. *desire . . . of pardon*: desire pardon of (from) your grace. This strangely clumsy Elizabethan construction has been explained by taking 'of' to mean concerning, on the subject of, and as analogous in use to *de* in French in similar cases of desiring, praying, &c.

l. 404. *your leisure . . . not*: you cannot command, you have not at your disposal, enough leisure.

l. 405. *gratify*: offer a gratification (i.e. gratuity) to. In the Middle Ages, judges, for their services, were paid,

not salaries by the State, but fees by the litigants. Here it is the winning party that is asked to pay.

l. 409. *in lieu whereof*: in return for which (service).

l. 411. *cope*: meet (i.e. requite) with a fitting reward; 'cope' means to meet, encounter (in either a friendly or a hostile spirit). *withal*: a preposition governing 'ducats'; when 'with' stood at the end of a sentence, it was written 'withal'.

l. 413. *service*: this was the common word used in courtesy and compliment: 'we beg to remain, ever, your loving friends and humble, obedient servants.'

l. 417. *more mercenary*: seeking for a greater reward than the satisfaction of serving my friends.

l. 418. *know me*: double meaning: (1) (ostensibly to them) recognize me as a friend, don't pass me by as a stranger; (2) (secretly to herself) recognize me as being your wife.

l. 420. *attempt you*: try to induce you to accept our offer.

l. 421. *tribute*: token of gratitude. As it is Bassanio that starts this subject of a token, it does not look as if Portia had premeditated the little joke about the ring.

l. 423. *pardon me*: i. e. for my boldness.

l. 426. In scansion the third and fourth feet either may be regular iambi, or may be a pyrrhic and a spondee— I'll tàke | thiś ríng |: in any case the fifth foot is an iambus, with a strong emphasis on 'you'.

l. 427. A turn of comedy again: Portia well knows and is secretly happy in knowing the real reason why Bassanio hastily withdraws his hand, but she pretends to think that he does so in order not to let her take some others of the rings which, no doubt, he wore on his fingers.

l. 428. *in love*: double meaning: (1) in friendship; (2) (to herself) with a husband's love.

l. 430. *to give*: by giving.

l. 432. *have . . . it*: have taken a fancy to it.

l. 434. *dearest*: (in money value), most expensive.

l. 437. *liberal . . . offers*: but not so in carrying out your offers.

ll. 440 sq. Finding excuses of no avail, he comes out, at last, with the true reason of his reluctance. While outwardly much offended at the refusal, Portia must be feeling great inward satisfaction at this proof of her husband's love.

l. 441. *put it on*: namely, on my finger. In current

English the expression in the text would mean put it on, on one's *own* finger.

l. 444. *An if*: if; 'an' means 'if', so that the phrase is strengthened by the double 'if'.

l. 446. *hold out enemy*: continue to be angry with you.

l. 447. *for giving it*: for your giving it.

l. 448. *My Lord*: in addressing him thus by his title, Antonio means that he does not wish to bring the pressure of familiar friendship to bear upon the request he makes. Bassanio was of 'gentle' blood, and the friendship was between a member of the Venetian nobility and a 'city' magnate—between one of the aristocracy of blood and one of that of wealth. The delicate balance of poetic justice is again maintained; as Antonio had placed Bassanio under a heavy obligation by an act that nearly cost him his life, so now Bassanio repays the obligation by an act that threatens to cost him very dear in domestic happiness. Thus does this ring incident not only supply the comedy for the close of the play, but it serves to clear off scores in the matter, not of a mere so many thousand ducats, but of self-sacrifice between the two friends.

l. 450. *valu'd*: weighed, estimated. *commandment*: the Qq. and Ft. spell it as *commandément*, being four syllables in scansion.

l. 451. Without a word does Bassanio grant Antonio's request, though he knows well what it is likely to cost him. And this knowledge does not change his feelings towards his friend, just as that friend's feelings had not changed towards him even when, as he thought, he was about to cost him his life. The cordial tone of the last three lines shows this unabated friendly feeling.

SCENE II

Portia, like a good lawyer, does not forget to send the deed for signature to Shylock, and asks Gratiano to show the clerk the way to his house. This gives Nerissa a chance for getting *her* ring from her husband.

l. 3. *home*: is to be joined to 'be' for the meaning: be home before our husbands.

l. 4. Scan thus: Thìs déed | wìll bè | wéll wél | còme tó | Lòrénz | ò. The second foot is a pyrrhic, the third a spondee, and the line hypersyllabic.

l. 5. *well*: fortunately.

l. 6. *upon . . . advice*: on further reflexion.

l. 8. *That*: my company at dinner.

l. 15. *mayst*: will be able to. *old*: a great deal of, too much (a bit of Elizabethan slang).

l. 17. *outface them*: humorous double meaning: (1) put them out of countenance by giving them the lie (i.e. telling them they gave away the rings to women); (2) disconcert them with the *new faces* (namely, those of women) we shall put on at Belmont. *outswear them*: swear louder and with greater truth than they (namely, by swearing as under (1) above).

ACT V

Scene I

The earlier half of this scene has been called a moonlight idyll at Belmont, following upon and relieving the law-court scene at Venice; the latter half concludes the ring episode, in which Bassanio again finds a willing security in Antonio, this time for his good conduct during the rest of his married life. The earlier half opens presumably after the promised 'setting forth' of Lorenzo by Jessica, and consists of an interchange of romantic 'chaff', to call it so, between the two. This is followed by the announcement of the return of Portia from her supposed retirement in a convent, and of that of Bassanio from attending the trial at Venice. Then follows sweet music in the moonlit avenue at Belmont, reminding the listening couple that, at that very time, music, inaudible to human ears, is being sung in the sky above, in which the singers are the stars, whose song again is a response, anthem-wise, to the cherub-choir of heaven itself. From one of them a reflection is drawn forth on the power of music upon man and brute alike, to change their disposition for the better, closing with the remark that the man whom music does not thus move and change is a man of stratagem and spoliation—'let no such man be trusted'. Who does not realize that such a man was exemplified in Shylock, who had shut the 'ears of his house' against harmless music, and had plotted the death of a good man? Into this scene enters Portia, to whose mind, when a passing cloud obscures the moon and allows the light in her hall to

become visible, occurs the thought that so, too, shines a good deed in a dark world of wickedness, and that a good deed may pale before a deed still more beneficent, even as the candle-light had paled in the moonlight. The same thought that all good deeds are comparative arises in her mind, when to her ears the music sounds sweeter in the midst of the silence of night than it would in the midst of the sounds of daytime. The reader is left to make the application of this comparative nature of good deeds to those done respectively by Portia and by Antonio: an application that her own modesty refrains from making. Lastly, into this scene enter the gentlemen—the two husbands and the friend. While Antonio is being introduced (for the first time as he thinks) by the husband to the wife, Nerissa loses no time in picking a quarrel with Gratiano about her ring. This gives Portia her cue, and, with the same deliberation that marked her handling of the case in the law-court, she leads up, step by step, to a grave difference with Bassanio about the ring that she had given him. The issue of the difference is that the husband submits himself, after the lesson she has taught him (in all severity, but in all love too), to the guidance of the wife's superior powers of mind. The friend that had once given the security of his body to the Jew for a money loan, now gives the security of his soul to the wife, for the good conduct of the husband. All the gall and wormwood, that such a submission under security would certainly imply, is removed by that strength of love which in Bassanio's heart is fully equal to that in his wife's.

There is but one scene in this act, and a German version of the play makes this scene to be the last of a rearrangement of the fifth act in which the trial-scene is made to be the first. This is not an improvement: nothing short of the importance that belongs to a whole act consisting of comedy could obliterate the effects of the prolonged agony of an impending tragedy; the humorous mock-trial scene in which Bassanio stands as the culprit is, for this reason, given the proportions of an act, in order to counterweigh the terribly earnest trial-scene in which Antonio is defendant.

ll. 1–22. This "capping' of sentiments, if not of verses, resembles the 'amoebean contests' of shepherds and shepherdesses in classical literature; for example, in Virgil's eclogues. Here, the 'theme', as musicians call

it, on which the changes are rung, consists of the words 'in such a night'.

l. 2. The whole atmosphere seems to be saturated with the same romantic honeymoon love as the two human beings that breathe it are: the very winds and trees are in love with one another.

l. 3. *did . . . noise*: double meaning: (1) did not rustle with their leaves, as they would have in a stronger and ruder wind; (2) did not scream, as human maidens sometimes do, under similar circumstances.

ll. 4 sq. These personages occur in classical literature—in Virgil and Ovid; but it is certain that Shakespeare got their stories, not from the Latin of these poets, but from the English of Chaucer, the first two from his *Troilus and Cressida*, the other three from his *Legend of Good Women*. It is in Chaucer and not in the originals of Virgil or Ovid that some of these ladies act and suffer in the moonlight. *Troilus*: son of Priam, King of Troy.

l. 6. *Cressid*: daughter of the Trojan soothsayer Calchas; she was devotedly loved by Troilus, but broke her faith to him, for the sake of a Greek hero, Diomedes. *lay*: lodged.

l. 7. *Thisbe*: Pyramus and Thisbe were lovers in ancient Babylon. When waiting for a tryst, the latter was frightened away by hearing a lion; the former, arriving later, mistook certain evidences to indicate that Thisbe had been killed by the lion, and in grief killed himself; returning, Thisbe found Pyramus dead, and killed herself. A comic version of this story is acted by the artisans in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. *fearfully*: timidly (a common meaning once). *the dew*: the dewy *grass* is meant, but the fairy lightness of her tread is indicated by the omission of the word 'grass', as if she trod on the dew only.

l. 10. *Dido*: Queen of Carthage; she fell in love with Aeneas, who on his way from Troy had landed at Carthage, and was her guest, but who sailed away without responding to her appeal to stay. *willow*: willow wand, a sign of mourning.

l. 11. *waft*: wafted, beckoned to; literally waved (her hand) to: see note on III. ii. 318. *love*: lover (as also in l. 22): Aeneas is meant.

l. 12. *again*: back; i.e. to put back to shore with his ship.

l. 13. *Medea*: an enchantress, who undertook to restore

her aged father-in-law to youthful vigour by means of herbs medicated by her magic art. *enchanted*: i.e. herbs medicated after being gathered.

l. 15. *steal from*: a sly double meaning: (1) steal herself away from, run away from; (2) rob of his wealth (as the word 'wealthy' suggests).

l. 16. *unthrift love*: spendthrift lover; Lorenzo was an impecunious adventurer, and the very opposite of his father-in-law, whose watchword was 'thrift'.

ll. 20–2. Here comes in the chaffing after the romantic talk: she calls him faithless, and he calls her a shrew, in return. *slander*: referring to l. 20. *it*: the antecedent is the noun 'slander' inferred from the verb.

l. 23. *out-night*: outdo in enumerating such other moonlight nights.

l. 31. These wayside crosses continue to exist all over Italy long after Portia's days, but the custom of praying before them for the fulfilment of one's heart's desires, as she is here said to do, is a thing of the past.

l. 33. *holy hermit*: no doubt this was Balthazar disguised as one; when Portia and Nerissa had cast off their men's disguises shortly after leaving Venice, and had resumed their own women's dress, Balthazar was their escort or courier; he had been disguised as a hermit and Portia was, or was represented as, praying at wayside crosses, in order to lend colour to her pretext of retirement to a convent, whence the household at Belmont would suppose she was now returning.

ll. 37, 38. *ceremoniously . . . welcome*: the adverb 'ceremoniously' is in sense an adjective or noun—let us prepare ceremonious welcome, or, let us prepare ceremonies of welcome.

ll. 39–48. Launcelot bawls out the news of his master's arrival to one whom, by his voice, he knows very well to be his *vice*-master, but whom, up to the last, he will not acknowledge as such; he shows this by speaking of him in the third person, meaning thus to ignore him and his presence within earshot.

l. 39. Launcelot bursts his throat in imitating the notes of the mounted messenger's horn or trumpet.

l. 46. *post*: messenger riding post or express.

l. 47. *horn . . news*: Launcelot confuses the post-horn with the horn of plenty—the cornucopia.

l. 49. *expect*: wait for; a Latin sense of the word.

l. 53. *music* : musicians, band; the word 'noise' was similarly once used for music and musicians both.

l. 54. *sleeps*: rests calm and motionless. *bank*: flower beds or grass plots; the calm moonlight on these is meant to be contrasted with the flickering moonlight cast through the moving foliage of trees and bushes. There is, besides, a personification which is carried on in l. 66.

l. 57. *Become*: are suitable to. *touches*: the play of the fingers on a musical instrument.

l. 59. *patines*: plates, discs; a patine is a plate, usually made of gold, used in the celebration of the Christian Eucharist; here the stars are meant, whose silver light need not raise any difficulty about the word 'gold' used to indicate it. Another reading is 'patterns', meaning the imaginary figures made by the constellations; but the word 'orb' (l. 60) makes it clear that single stars, not constellations, are here meant.

l. 61. *But . . . sings*: that . . . does not sing. *in his motion*: while moving across the sky. *his*: its.

l. 62. Ceaselessly singing in accompaniment to (or in response to) the song of the pure-eyed cherub choristers of heaven; these cherub bands lead in this divine music, the stars echo or respond. *young-eyed*: having the pure, guileless eyes of childhood. Cherubs are conventionally drawn as children, or rather as only the heads of children, with a pair of wings at the neck; here the cherubs are looked upon as the *choir-boys* of heaven.

ll. 63–5. There exists in the immortal part of man's nature—his soul—a power to respond to the harmony of the cherub-choirs of heaven, similar to that which enables the stars to respond to them; but as long as man's immortal soul is confined within his mortal body, its power to perceive and respond to this harmony is blunted, so that it cannot hear it. *Such harmony*: power or capacity of a similar nature to respond or vibrate to the angel-song. *vesture of decay*: decaying or mortal body that invests the soul; 'of decay' is an adjectival phrase and is opposed to 'immortal' above. *grossly*: so as to blunt the delicate sensibility of the soul. *it*: the antecedent is 'souls', the grammar being a little inaccurate. *it*: the antecedent is 'harmony'.

There is a reference here to the Pythagorean fancy of the 'music of the spheres': as ordinary human music regulates the rhythm of dancing—gives the time to

dancers—so the regular motion of the heavenly bodies across the sky was fancied by Pythagoras to be regulated by a heavenly music, which was inaudible to human ears. References to this doctrine are frequent in literature.

l. 66. Come, break the silence of the moonlight with the sounds of music. *wake*: namely, from the 'sleep' of l. 54, which here is given a slightly different meaning—silence, instead of motionlessness. *Diana*: here, the goddess of the moon; in mythology, commonly called Luna, while Diana is called the goddess of hunting.

l. 68. *draw her home*: either (1) attract her home (with the sweetness of the music), or (2) bring her home as in a triumphal car.

l. 70. *attentive*: on the stretch (the literal Latin sense), wholly absorbed in the music.

l. 72. *unhandled*: untrained, not broken in. The Elizabethan word 'manage', meaning the training of a horse, would give 'unmanaged' as the literal equivalent of 'unhandled', being derived from Latin *manus*, the hand.

l. 73. *bellowing*: this refers to herds (of cattle), l. 71. *neighing*, of course, refers to colts.

l. 77. *mutual stand*: pause common to all; standstill, actuated by the same impulse.

l. 78. *modest gaze*: softened look turned in the direction of the music.

l. 80. *feign*: imagine, fancy. *Orpheus*: a famous lyrist in Greek mythology, the power of whose music, in which he lamented the loss of his wife, Eurydice, moved man and beast and even the inanimate world, so that trees and rocks uprooted themselves and rivers altered their courses, in order to follow him and listen to his lament.

l. 81. *stockish*: insensible.

ll. 83, 84. The man that has not the inward capacity (the 'harmony' of l. 63) to be affected by sweet music ('concord . . . sounds').

l. 85. *spoils*: acts of spoliation.

l. 86. *motions*: workings, tendencies.

l. 87. *affections*: feelings. *Erebus*: a region of darkness in the Greek notion of hell.

l. 88. We feel that such a man was Shylock, and are thus brought from general thoughts of the power of music to a particular case bearing on the action of the play.

l. 90. *his*: its; so in l. 82.

l. 91. *a good deed*: such, for example, as she herself

had done. The surrounding darkness, caused by a passing cloud hiding the moon, stands for the wicked world.

l. 98. *your music of the house*: the band belonging to your house. The modern construction would be 'the music of your house'.

l. 99. *without respect*: either (1) without consideration of surrounding circumstances (as in ll. 101 and 104 sq.), or (2) unless particular attention is bestowed on it (as in l. 103). The context has here to decide the meaning in either case.

l. 101. *Silence*: the silence of the night, when the noises of daytime do not drown its sweetness. *virtue*: power (as in the expression 'in virtue of').

l. 103. *attended*: attended to.

l. 106. The sweet and impetuous notes of the nightingale are contrasted with the feeble piping of the diminutive wren.

l. 107. *by season . . . are*: are rendered agreeable if done at the proper time; 'season'd' is here used of things made agreeable, not to the palate, as it commonly is, but in a general sense.

ll. 109, 110. (1) The Qq. and Ff. read 'Peace, *how* the moon', &c. Portia enjoins silence on Nerissa, and exclaims 'how calm the moonlight scene is; we should not disturb that calmness with the sound of our voices': hereupon by a coincidence the sound of the music also ceases. The objections are that this coincidence is not a likely one, and that the words '*how* the moon would not be awak'd', which must needs be the grammatical construction, have a very odd meaning. (2) One emendation is 'Peace, *ho*!' &c., as in the text. The meaning is the same as in (1) above, with the exception that here in (2) there is a mere assertion, while in (1) there is an admiring exclamation, about the moon's sleep. This 'sleep' in both (1) and (2) may also be taken to mean, not the calmness of the moonlight, but its obscuration by clouds, so that the moon is *invisible*. (3) The same reading as in (2), with a different meaning: Portia calls out to the musicians to stop, and they stop in obedience to her call. The rest of the meaning is the same as in (1) and (2). This is the best interpretation and reading. (4) Another emendation—a feeble one—is 'Peace, *now* the moon', &c.: i.e. the moon is, at this moment, again obscured by clouds. *Endymion*: a young and beautiful shepherd, much given, however, to

sleep; he was beloved by Selene or Luna, goddess of the moon. *would not*: wishes not to.

ll. 112 13. *the cuckoo*: this bird is not a sweet singer. *bad voice*: we infer from this that Portia's voice was not sweet, and that, perhaps, it was harsh, and more a man's than a woman's voice; this would materially have assisted her disguise in the court. At the same time it was probably no more than light-hearted modesty.

l. 115. *Which*: who; the antecedent is 'husbands'. *words*: prayers.

l. 121. *tucket*: set of notes on a trumpet. A kind of musical composition is called in Italian a *toccata*; both the English and the Italian words are derivatives from the same verb ('touch', 'toccare').

l. 122. *his trumpet*: i.e. the set of notes or 'tucket' that Bassanio had adopted as his own: it seems to have been the fashion among the aristocracy for each man to have his own tucket.

l. 124. *daylight sick*: the metaphor is suggested by the paleness (next line); the clouds had vanished, and the moon was again shining brightly. *paler*: than daylight; i.e. it was bright moonlight.

l. 127. Bassanio overhears the last part of Portia's speech, and carries it on in this strain. *with*: at the same time as. *Antipodes*: though it is really night in our hemisphere and day in the other hemisphere, yet it would be day with us also, if you, &c.

l. 129. *light . . . light*: Shakespeare often plays on this word; the second meaning is 'full of levity in conduct'.

l. 131. *so*: heavy, sad. *for me*: owing to me, through my conduct if I be a light wife. These lines lead up to the 'ring' scene that follows. But they have a further underlying significance, which will be seen if, *mentally*, we interchange words in them, and read 'light husband', 'heavy wife', 'never be Portia so for Bassanio'. Portia knew that Bassanio had been a 'man of pleasure', and in accepting him as husband she felt she had undertaken to reform him in this respect. This ring incident therefore, besides following upon the serious trial-scene as a contrast and relief, is also the starting-point of the salutary influence of a pure-souled woman upon a man highly susceptible of such an influence.

l. 132. *sort*: ordain as he pleases.

ll. 136, 137. *You . . . sense be*: you have every reason to

be. *bound to him*: under obligation to him. *was much . . . you*: stood heavy security for you.

l. 138. *well . . . of*: richly repaid; namely, by being introduced, as I now am, to his wife (of course he was repaid also in Bassanio's friendship, but Antonio here means gallantly to compliment Portia).

l. 141. *breathing courtesy*: courtesy consisting merely of breath or words.

l. 148. Scan thus: Thàt shé | dìd give me, ‖ whòse poé | sỳ wás. The 'me', being unemphatic, does not count as a separate syllable, and there is a pause after 'me' that makes up for the wanting foot. *poesy*: 'posy', motto, even if not in verse or rhyme. Cf. l. 151.

l. 149. *cutlers' poetry*: 'posies' inscribed on cutlery: this used once to be done, as also on rings and handkerchiefs.

l. 150. *leave me not*: double meaning: (1) forsake me not (spoken by the giver); (2) part not with me (spoken, as it were, by the ring).

l. 151. *What*: why; indicating angry impatience.

ll. 151–6. The number of 'you's' and 'your's' in these lines shows the vehemence of Nerissa's language and gesture.

l. 155. *for me*: for my sake; that you cared much for me.

l. 156. *respective*: careful, mindful.

l. 158. The grammatical order is 'The clerk that had it will ne'er', &c.: i.e. what you call a clerk is really a woman.

l. 159. *to be a man*: to grow up to manhood.

ll. 161–5. The audience smile at this uncomplimentary description of his wife by Gratiano; but Nerissa has very different feelings at hearing herself so described.

l. 162. *scrubbed*: stunted; 'scrub' is the same as 'shrub', meaning undergrowth, bush.

l. 167. *slightly*: slightingly, lightly, carelessly.

l. 169. *riveted*: is a disyllable in scansion, pronounced 'rivet'.

l. 170. The first foot is a trochee, | I gàve | .

l. 172. Scan thus: I dàre | bè swórn | fòr hím | hé, wòuld | nòt leáve it: both 'him' and 'life' are accented, so that the fourth foot is a trochee; 'it', being unemphatic, is absorbed in 'leave'.

l. 174. *masters*: is master of, possesses.

l. 176. *An . . . me*: if it (the cause of grief) were given to me by *my* husband.

ll. 177, 178. The reader, who is in the secret, is only amused at the cleverness with which Portia leads up to and fastens the quarrel on her husband; but he, poor man, has been on tenter-hooks during her speech. *I were best*: see note on II. viii. 33. *defending it*: holding fast the ring, trying to retain the ring in my possession.

ll. 179–84. Gratiano snatches eagerly at what he thinks to be a chance of getting himself acquitted, by declaring that Bassanio had done the same thing that is charged to him as an offence. He was once (IV. i. 290 sq.) ready and willing to lose his wife; he is here readily sacrificing his friend.

l. 183. *man*: servant-man.

l. 186. *fault*: namely, that of giving away the ring.

l. 189. *so*: as the finger is 'void' of the ring.

ll. 193–6. The second foot (dìd knòw, concèive) is a pyrrhic, and the third foot (tó whóm, fór whóm, fór whát) is a spondee in each line: in l. 196, the third foot (-ìnglỳ) is a pyrrhic, and the fourth (I léft) a spondee. *left*: parted with; both here and in l. 172 the very word of the motto is used.

l. 199. *virtue*: power; the word is suggested by the *magic* power often thought to reside in rings, but refers here to the power of this ring as a token of love.

l. 201. *contain*: retain: if you had realized how your sense of honour was concerned in your retaining the ring.

l. 203. *What man*: emphatic for 'who', but with a humorous double meaning, for it was not a man, but a woman who 'urged the thing'.

l. 204. *defended it*: either (1) forbidden the act of asking for the ring (French *defendre*, to forbid), or (2) tried to retain the ring in your possession, as in l. 178.

l. 205. *wanted*: who would have wanted; strict grammar would require the construction to be this: 'so unreasonable . . . as to have wanted the modesty *not* to urge the thing,' &c.

l. 206. *urge the thing*: earnestly demand the ring, importune you for the ring. *ceremony*: sacred object; in *Julius Caesar* a statue is said to be 'decked with ceremonies', meaning festal garlands.

l. 208. *but*: if . . . not.

l. 210. *civil doctor*: pun, (1) doctor of civil law; (2) obliging doctor, because he refused to receive payment.

l. 214. *he*: the grammar requires 'him', so as to be in apposition with 'him' in l. 213; but if the sentence 'the which . . . displeas'd away' is taken as a parenthesis, 'he' is correct, being in apposition with the nominative 'which', l. 211.

l. 215. *What . . . say*: what more can I tell you? The line implies a feeling of hesitation and helplessness as to what he is about to say: namely, that he parted at last with the ring.

l. 216. With what delicacy of feeling does Bassanio refrain from saying who it was that enforced him to do so; *we* know it was Antonio, and feel the contrast between the action here and that of Gratiano in ll. 179 sq., who at once named Bassanio in the hope of saving himself from blame.

l. 217. *shame*: such as I felt at refusing the request. *courtesy*: such as impelled me to comply with the request.

l. 220. *these*: raising his hands towards the stars.

l. 234. *Nor I his clerk*: pun, (1) nor will I deny anything to his clerk; (2) nor I who was his clerk, 'his clerk' being in apposition with 'I', and the sentence being carried only far enough to bring out the double meaning. *advis'd*: see note, II. i. 42.

l. 235. *leave . . . protection*: leave me to take care of—to do as I please with—my reputation; the wife is said to be under the protection of the husband: this suggests Nerissa's language.

l. 236. *take*: catch.

l. 245. *double self*: pun, (1) explained by l. 244; (2) full of duplicity, faithless.

ll. 246–8. The husband here subjects himself to the wife, to whose natural superiority in intellect and character this subjection is rightly due. It was to soften this relation between the two that Portia had been made by the poet, in the third casket-scene, to declare her adhesion to the doctrine of the subjection of the wife to the husband: so that she accepts her present position without seeking for it, because it is imposed on her.

l. 249. *wealth*: weal, welfare; namely, the happiness of winning Portia.

l. 250. *Which*: the antecedent is either (1) 'wealth', i.e. Bassanio's happiness would have been blasted, had it been obtained at the cost of Antonio's life, or (2) 'body' i.e. my body would have perished but for the 'civil doctor's' wisdom as judge. *miscarried*: perished.

ll. 251–3. Then, Antonio had stood security with his body as pledge; now, he does so again, with his soul as pledge. This pledge is of greater value than the other, because what it is given for—character—is of higher moment than what the other was given for—a money loan. *advisedly*: knowingly, purposely.

ll. 263, 264. i.e. You have tried to amend our lives and characters when there was no occasion to do so—when we had not befouled them.

l. 272. *even*: supply 'have' before.

l. 275. *soon*: quickly.

l. 277. *richly*: with rich cargoes; see 'ceremoniously', v. i. 37.

l. 278. This bit of mystery as to how she came by the letter is meant, no doubt, for dramatic effect, for it gives us an idea of Portia's apparently unbounded sources of information.

ll. 280 1. *you*: there is all the emphasis of astonishment on the first 'you' of each line.

l. 286. *life*: namely, at the trial scene. *living*: means of living, riches.

l. 290. *fee*: clerk's fee: the clerk refuses a fee just as the civil doctor had refused one.

l. 294. *manna*: this was the food sent miraculously from heaven to feed the Jews during their wanderings in the wilderness.

l. 298. And heap questions on me that I promise faithfully to answer; a legal expression, meaning to make a person in court swear that he will answer all things faithfully.

l. 299. *all things*: for instance, how I personated Doctor Bellario.

l. 306. *fear*: fear about.

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